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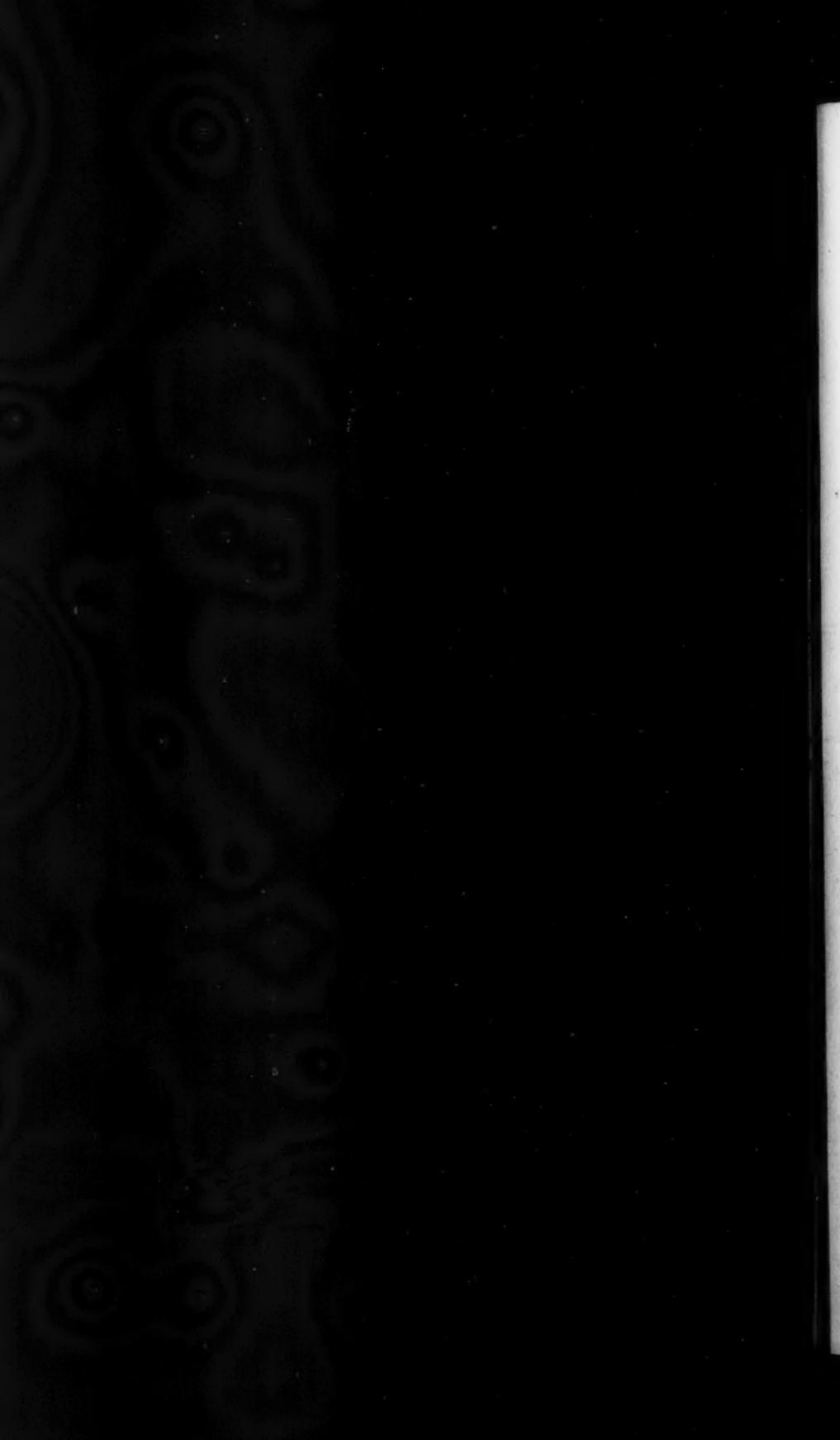
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THE CORNHILL



No. 966

DEC. 1945

MAGAZINE

EDITED BY PETER QUENNELL

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JOHN MURRAY, 50 ALBEMARLE STREET, LONDON, W.1

EDITORIAL NOTE

It is possible that, in a hundred years' time, some diligent researcher into the literary periodicals of 1945 will be surprised when he notices how few references are provided by recent issues of the *CORNHILL* to the tremendous and catastrophic dramas through which we have been passing. We should like to reassure him. At the safe distance of a century, he may not understand that to live in a period bound to take its place as one of the most crucial in recorded human history is, from the creative point of view, an exceedingly doubtful privilege. Not many writers have the leisure they need : all are oppressed by a sense of crisis or a feeling of anti-climax : the world that confronts them perpetually opens up in new and terrifying prospects. Among such surroundings, only art is stable. Silence does not imply stupidity ; and a moment will come when we shall see 1945 in its true perspective. Meanwhile, we believe that the qualities inseparable from any form of good writing possess a double importance and a double value : that the function of an editor is to encourage good writing wherever he can find it. Clarity of thought and precision of language afford clues by which civilised man may yet escape the Minotaur. Without them, he is certainly doomed to prompt annihilation.

[*Note to Subscribers : It is hoped during 1946 to produce the CORNHILL more frequently, and to enlarge our circle of subscribers by printing a larger number of copies of each issue.*]



Thomas Gray—III

BY JOHN RUSSELL

Gray had not a good verbal memory. A great friend of his once recorded that he was, if anything, relieved and pleased by this defect; for if he had been able to draw up at will any once-read passage from the vaults of his mind, he would never have ceased imitating his favourite monitors. As it was, he every year trod deeper into the floors of memory an enormous number of disremembered lines; and along with them was strewn a variety of miscellaneous knowledge such as at times baffled, even irritated, his friends. Gray never repented of this amiable dissipation of his parts. He was quite happy to read the Peerage, or to annotate the Pembroke College library copy of Philip Miller's gardening dictionary; and in his notebooks, or on the blank pages of a pocket atlas, he would carefully inscribe the names of every 'building, ruin, park, garden, prospect, picture or monument' which pleased him. If he was reproached, he would say that 'everyone must judge of his own capabilities, and cut his amusements according to his disposition.' In time, this desultory turn of mind became for Gray a point of honour, if not indeed a moral principle. Buffon, for instance, excited his admiration by the elegance and point of his style, as much as by the universal range of his curiosity; but he seemed to Gray to hug too closely the perimeter of his vast subject. 'The weak part of it,' wrote Gray in 1766, 'is a love of system, which runs through it, the most contrary thing in the world to a science,

entirely grounded upon experiments, and that has nothing to do with vivacity of imagination.' Sixteen years later he noted with mischief that although thirteen volumes of the *Histoire Naturelle* had been published, 'he is not come to the monkies yet, who are a very numerous people.' Even such a writer as d'Alembert, normally a favourite of Gray, would be reproved for any too systematic work ; the *Elements de Philosophie*, for example, seemed to Gray 'dry as a stick, hard as a stone, and cold as a cucumber.'

William Mason, for many years the butt and confidant of the poet, never forgot that Gray once told him that good writing required 'not only great parts, but the very best of those parts.' In Gray's own case, the full use of his parts was achieved by the purposeful secretion of an almost infinite variety of knowledge ; his mind resembled in fact one of those German salt-mines into which was recently thrust loot from every country in Europe. Tacitus, Dante and Guido Reni lay stacked in company with Pergolesi, Dryden and Anacreon. Not all the galleries had such an exalted set of trophies ; some indeed would suggest the hasty pillaging of Liberty's, the Record Office and the church furniture department of the Army and Navy Stores. To Gray, however, all knowledge had the object of keeping his mind in the highest state of readiness for some poetical leap. To this end, even the measurement of a boulder from Stonehenge, the price of a Gothic wallpaper and the causes of mortality at Hartlepool were carefully noted down. Gray's handwriting has the curving bubble-like line of blown glass ; one could infer from it the grace and suavity of the poet's mind, but less easily their obverse—the mutinous, beach-combing curiosity which is preserved in the notebooks.

Gray's is an inbred kind of poetry, a poetry so dense in allusion to noble forbears that even the candour of the poet himself and the detective energy of his editors may not have revealed all its sources. The analysis of *The Fatal Sisters* or *The Descent of Odin* is something of an archaeological feat ; for even if Gondula, Geira, Sangrida and 'black, terrific Mista' are familiar names to the reader, and 'high-born Hoel's harp' a regular visitor to his thoughts, he may still miss, in other poems, the glance at Cowley or the borrowing of a thought from Petrarch. Gray demanded that such things should be done with wit and skill, and not, for instance, in the style of John Home's *Agis*—'an antique statue painted white and red, frized, and dressed in a negligée made by a Yorkshire mantua-maker.' His borrowings, in short, were made with the transcendent art which distinguishes Mozart's operas from those of Francesco di Majo upon the same themes ; and where there remained some visible token of the grafting, the old line was found to have acquired new majesty, much as in *The Waste Land*, or in Miss Sitwell's recent poems, fragments from Kyd and Marlowe and thoughts from Harvey and Aquinas have the force of some terrible

novelty. Few passages in English poetry have so native a ring as the opening lines of Gray's *Elegy*; yet they are, on his own admission, based upon two lines from the *Purgatorio*—

squilla di lontano,
Che paia 'l giorno pianger, che si muore.

One may imagine that Gray would have been delighted by the similar impulse which later inserted into a poem of Baudelaire three exquisite lines whose base is in the *Elegy*:

Mainte fleur épanche à regret
Son parfum doux comme un secret
Dans les solitudes profondes.

Among those who were more nearly his contemporaries, the drenched, nostalgic movement of Gray's poems sometimes started off a quite independent flight of thoughts. Fox, for example, was a great reader of poetry, which he took to be 'the great refreshment of the human mind'; even arithmetic, in his view, needed ultimately the sanction of poetry. Lines of Gray would come into Fox's head while he was strolling in the Luxembourg, or pottering at Penshurst in a white hat and fustian shooting jacket. A stanza from *The Progress of Poesy*, for example, would strike him as certainly inspired by some Parisian ballet :

O'er Idalia's velvet-green
The rosy-crowned Loves are seen
On Cytherea's day
With antic sports, and blue-eyed pleasures,
Frisking light in frolic measures ;
Now pursuing, now retreating,
Now in circling troops they meet.

Fox was not happy about the echo from Phrynicus with which this stanza ends, but he detected in four of its lines the moment of 'the chaconne, and entrance of the ballerina'; and we in our turn may be reminded of the entrance of the Swan-Queen in *Lac des Cygnes*, and even perhaps of the formality of Petipa's diction :

Slow melting strains their Queen's approach declare ;
Where'er she turns the Graces homage pay.
With arms sublime, that float upon the air,
In gliding state she wins her easy way.

Such halcyon passages are by no means the whole of Gray's poetical world. The hundred lines of the Eton ode at first conjure such a picture of antique beauty as is slipped into a corner of Lawrence's great portrait of Queen Caroline; nor has the glassy, silver-winding Thames been so well evoked elsewhere in English—unless perhaps by Robert

Bridges. But, as so often in Gray, the generosity of nature is offset by the presence of those mischievous arbiters of human life whom Gray had come to know at a very early age. Disdainful Anger, pallid Fear and the altered eye of Unkindness had long been his familiars, as one may judge from the legal paper which says of his father that he had used Mrs. Gray 'in the most inhuman manner, by beating, kicking, punching, and with the most vile and abusive language.' In the long Pindaric ode, *The Progress of Poesy*, the vocabulary of despair is laid aside, and in its place Gray draws upon his inexhaustible credits of geographical allusion. He was a devoted student of Strabo, and had taken especially full notes of his account of India and Persia ; but the voyages of the Muse on her unorthodox route from Delphi to Stratford allowed of visits to the scented forests of Chile, the home of 'feather-cinctured Chiefs and dusky Loves,' not to speak of unnamed—

climes beyond the solar road,
Where shaggy forms o'er ice-built mountains roam.

The fragment on *The Alliance of Education and Government* has also an engaging freedom of reference. Its theme (the natural antagonism of north and south) recalls to Gray the snows of Zembla, the Libyan desert and 'Nile redundant o'er his summer-bed' ; and the gourmet and the naturalist in Gray dispute the honour of providing the finest prize for the victorious brood of winter, 'the blue-eyed myriads from the Baltic coast.'

At first sight the adaptations from the Norse, with their fantastic apparatus of doom and horror, appear mere gruesome exercises. There is in fact something almost comical in the idea of Gray, with his fine inks and silk-rag paper, faithfully transcribing the song of the Fatal Sisters as they hang over their loom—

See the grisly texture grow,
('Tis of human entrails made)
And the weights that play below,
Each a gasping warrior's head.

The Dog of Darkness, again, is really a remarkable fantasy for so decorous a recluse. One may wonder at the antiquarian spirit which led Gray to persevere with the disturbing vision of how this monster flung open his shaggy throat—

While from his jaws, with carnage filled,
Foam and human gore distilled.

The Bard, a Welsh variant of comparable savagery, stuck for a long time in Gray's throat. In fact he had to summon up a great number of auxiliary engines, with an authentic blind Welsh harpist in their rear, before he could complete it. Willoughby's *Ornithology* was consulted for the habits of the eagle ; the shores of Caernarvonshire,

opposite the isle of Anglesey, were reconnoitred at length ; Froissart supplied a note upon the gorgeousness of public life under Richard II ; a Polish Ambassador to Queen Elizabeth's Court provided the image of the Queen's 'lyon-port' ; and for the posture of the Bard himself Gray drew upon his memories of work by Raphael and Parmeggiano. In October 1761 Paul Sandby showed, at the Society of Artists, 'An Historical Landskip, representing the Welsh bard, in the opening of Mr. Gray's celebrated Ode.' This picture is now untraceable, and Gray would seem to have taken only an ironical interest in it.

It would be convenient to assert that, for Gray, the moment of composition was, as it is for most poets, the central moment of life. There is, however, no reason to suppose this. Gray wrote, on his own admission, 'by fits and starts at very distant intervals.' Sometimes, as in the *Hymn to Adversity*, one may sense a real poignance, even a certain momentum of feeling ; but in general the poems do not give the measure of the man. Gray would prepare himself for the act of composition by reading some lines of Spenser ; hoisted by this means upon the agreeable glacis of poetical utterance, he would pick his way for a few lines. Then he would stop, and the poem would lie in a drawer until some new jolt of circumstance would set it in motion again. Gray never courted the fate of Addison, who 'had not above three or four notes in poetry ; sweet enough indeed, like those of a German flute, but such as soon tire and satiate the mind with their frequent return.' His success was nicely estimated by an observer who, roughly midway in time between Gray and ourselves, had something of his talents and outlook. Edward Fitzgerald once wrote to Lowell, saying, 'I always think that there is more Genius in most of the three-volume Novels than in Gray : but by the most exquisite Taste, and indefatigable lubrication, he made of his own few thoughts, and many of other men's, a something which we all love to keep ever about us.' True as this may be of the poems, it neglects to mention what one may consider by far the most original of Gray's contribution to English literature—the evocations of landscape which lie thick among his letters.

Gray thought indifferently well of Rousseau, and does not seem to have remarked their shared taste for uncultivated nature. He saw him indeed mainly as a bad guest and a composer of improbable romances. After Rousseau had quarrelled with Hume, Gray wrote that 'for want of persecution and admiration (for these are his real complaints) he will go back to the continent.' Rousseau had none the less the fascination of notoriety, and Gray liked to hear gossip about him. When he found asylum in Prussian territory, for instance, in 1764, Gray passed on an account of how 'he lives in great plenty, the booksellers at the Hague being his bank, and ready to answer any sum he draws for . . . he is often flying about from village to village,

generally wears a sort of Armenian dress, and poses for a kind of misanthrope, but is held in great veneration by the people.' The only work of Rousseau which Gray whole-heartedly admired was *Emile*, in which he found 'a thousand lights struck out, a thousand important truths better expressed than ever they were before . . . particularly I think he has observed children with more attention and knows their meaning and the working of their little passions better than any other writer.' They were of course exceedingly unlike ; in place of the general brooding, the eloquent scenes to which Rousseau would be inspired by some Alpine solitude, Gray moved with grasshopper-leaps across the English countryside, employing for its praise a wonderfully precise and flexible instrument.

Gray thought that, in general, a northward movement was necessary for the full enjoyment of scenery. He liked the Isle of Thanet, and parts of Sussex and Hampshire, and he felt a tenderness of association for the country round Windsor, but only a journey to the Highlands, he felt, could give the sensation of travel in its highest form —the overturning of accepted ideas. Those who had not seen the Highlands were at best poor things : 'their imagination can be made up of nothing but bowling-greens, flowering shrubs, horse-ponds, Fleet-ditches, shell-grottoes and Chinée-rails.' Some years earlier he had written from Stoke Poges in rueful style, to say that the scenic resources of the neighbourhood were limited to 'a compact neat box of red brick with sash windows, or a grotto made of flints and shell-work, or a walnut-tree with three molehills under it, stuck with honeysuckles round a basin of goldfishes.' The south had nevertheless some agreeable visions, and Gray's notes have the freshness, verve and technical mastery of a Constable sketchbook. Where so much depends upon the sustained amenity, the natural undress of the narrative, it is difficult to do justice by quotation ; but one may perhaps single out an early visit to Southampton Water. Gray was enchanted by the view from Portsmouth across to where the Fleet, under Admiral Sir Edward Hawke, was making ready to sail.

From Fareham to Southampton, [he wrote], where you are upon a level with the coast, you have a thousand such peeps and delightful openings, but would you see the whole at once, you must get upon Ports-Down on this side Portsmouth. It is the top of a ridge that forms a natural Terrass 3 mile long, literally not three times broader than Windsor-Terrass with a gradual fall on both sides and covered with a turf like Newmarket. . . . Just at your foot in appearance, the fleet, the sea winding and breaking in bays into the land, the deep shade of tall oaks in the enclosures, which become blue as they go off to distance, Portchester Castle, Calshot Castle, and all the Isle of Wight, in which you plainly distinguish the fields, hedgerows and woods next the shore, and a background of hills behind them.

Gray liked, too, to get inside a great house, and spoke freely about what he found there. Warwick Castle, for instance, had recently been done up in what seemed to him a doubtful genre.

He has sash'd the great Appartement, to be sure, (I can't help these things) and being since told, that square sash-windows were not Gothic, he has put certain whim-wams inside the glass, which appearing through are to look like fretwork. Then he has scooped out a little Burrough in the massy walls of the place for his little self and his children, which is hung with paper and printed linen and carved chimney-pieces, in the exact manner of Berkeley Square or Argyle Buildings. What in short can a Lord do nowadays, that is lost in a great old solitary castle, but skulk about and get into the first hole he finds, as a rat would do in like case.

Gray grew into middle life with few or none of those passionate incidents which are so often considered the crown of life. Interested love, the traditional aim of all human kind, did not seem to come his way. He grieved for friends lost, and for affections robbed of their natural term by a quarrel, a mortal illness or a fit of violence ; he showed the greatest tenderness for his family. Yet in general one may suspect that for Gray the central moments of life were those of solitary pleasure—sometimes while reading or listening to music, sometimes while awaiting the return of the redstart, the ripening of the bergamot-pear or the flowering of the Soleil d'Or narcissus, and sometimes in the presence and study of landscape. Gregarious persons can picture only with difficulty the appeasing sweetness of these moments ; for Gray they rose peak-high among terrestrial pleasures. The last and the most fully detailed of his major tours was that made in the Lake District and Yorkshire during the winter of 1769-70. Gray was then at the height of his powers as narrator and observer. He saw everything—a cormorant flying over the blue mirror of Ullswater, the 'thin bleuish smoke' of melting hoar-frost on Borrowdale, the foaming excitements of Lodore falls. He noted the tenacity of oak, ash and holly as they sprang vertically from the staring rock ; the glassy Derwent, burdened with trout ; the innocent cunning of the dalesmen, as they made their way by uncharted paths or dared to plunder the eagles' nest ; the January snow on Cross-fell ; the char, in Buttermere, and around Derwentwater the curious lichens, gale and Dutch myrtle. It was only some sixteen years later that Francis Towne visited the Lakes, bringing to them a feeling for their massive stillness which has perhaps never been equalled in English watercolour. Gray felt something of the same awe when he stood by the waters of Thirlmere, noting how the vast crags were reflected in its black-seeming depths and (with his usual precision) how 'little shining torrents hurry down the rocks to join it, with not a bush to overshadow them, or cover their march.' Early in October 1769 Gray made his

way past Helm-Crag (noting the strange broken outline of its top, 'like some gigantic building demolished') to Grasmere. As if prefiguring the association which would later endear this little lake to all readers of poetry, Gray took particular pains with his notation; the result may stand with Francis Towne's painting of the same scene. The margin of Grasmere-water was

hollowed into small bays with bold eminences, some of rock, some of soft turf, that half conceal and vary the figure of the little lake they command; from the shore a low promontory pushes itself far into the water, and on it stands a white village with the parish-church rising in the midst of it, hanging enclosures, corn-fields, and meadows green as an emerald with their trees and hedges and cattle fill up the whole space from the edge of the water and just opposite to you is a large farmhouse at the bottom of a steep smooth lawn embosomed in old woods which climb half-way up the mountain's side, and discover above them a broken line of crags, that crown the scene. Not a single red tile, no flaring gentleman's house or garden-walls, break in upon the repose of this little unsuspected paradise.

Rather than sleep in a damp, cellar-dark room at Ambleside, Gray made onward the same day and reached Windermere, which he was agreeably surprised to find a Mississippi among lakes—'ten miles in length, and at most a mile over, resembling the course of some vast and magnificent river, but no flat marshy grounds, no osier-beds or patches of scrubby plantation on its banks.' Gray was personally the most *difficile* of travellers, and one of his companions complained that he was chronically peevish, terrified at the idea of mounting a horse, and incapable of setting foot in a boat; but for us these irritations do not exist, as we follow his course through the unclouded optic of a prose clear and swift as the Derwent. In Yorkshire Gray visited Gordale Scar, the terror of solitary travellers. James Ward, and more recently John Piper, have recorded the forward-sloping grandeur of this giant crag; for Gray, as he stood beneath its 'dreadful canopy' and drops from the overhanging height fell noisily upon his head, it was perhaps the most awful single impression which he had received since the Alpine rides of thirty years earlier. Nature, he felt, was putting forth her most terrible powers; but within a few weeks of his return to the south, he became suddenly aware, not only of the fearful properties of landscape, but of the kindred terrors of a desperate human attachment.

Gray had never been above repeating a tale of amorous prowess, especially if the parties concerned were foreigners and therefore legitimately taken up with such pursuits; but for himself and his friends, the idea of passionate love carried with it an element of comedy, even of farce. His friends' marriages had always some ludicrous side; he

himself would never consider so perilous a venture. His affections were of a more temperate sort. Everything about him, in fact, bore witness to a continent and settled mode of life ; and it was by some strange freak of circumstance that the last months of his life were disfigured by an experience which he found at once exalting, baffling and mortally painful.

In the last week of November 1769 Gray's friend, Norton Nicholls, wrote to him from Bath. The regular streets, parade and circus of the city pleased him immensely, and his letter bulged with topographical information ; but its real excuse was to introduce a new friend — a young Swiss, Charles Victor de Bonstetten, whom he had met in the most casual way at the Assembly Rooms. They had literally fallen into each other's arms while perching upon a table in the hope of securing a better view of the dancers. The accident proved mutually welcome. Nicholls thought him 'vastly better than any thing English (of the same age) I ever saw' ; and Bonstetten, whose social sense was very highly evolved, soon found how best to please this new acquaintance. The topographer in Nicholls was excited by accounts of impenetrable Swiss forests, in which savage eagles disputed in perpetual darkness for their prey ; he hastened to report upon this great treat. When Gray met Bonstetten in London, about a fortnight later, he in his turn was quite bewitched ; and a few days before Christmas the two travelled together to Cambridge, where Bonstetten remained for about three months. He was then twenty-two years old ; the indulged son of the treasurer of Berne, he had travelled more or less as he pleased. In appearance he was plump and agreeable ; he had the tint and lustrous eye of perfect health, and even when painted in the character of Hamlet he found it impossible to simulate anything but the most enviable complaisance of outlook. He had real intellectual curiosity, and the usages of the great world did not blind him to the fact that in Gray he had met, as he wrote to his mother, 'the first man of merit in the country.' At first he lodged in a coffee-house near Pembroke, took his meals there, and visited Gray every evening ; but later he spent more and more of each day with the poet. He was genuinely studious. He would get up early, and before breakfasting off tea and muffins would put in time on a self-imposed course of *Paradise Lost* ; an entry in the college library register records the loan to Mr. Bonstetten of *Johnson's Dictionary* and the *Biographica Britannica* ; and he and Gray would read solidly in Shakespeare and Linnaeus. When he was no longer there, Gray remembered vividly how he had stood on the corner, or 'tinkled on the pianoforte,' or stretched himself at ease upon the sofa. His verve was Alcibiadean, and the habitual *morgue* of Cambridge society served only to inflame and enhance it. He wrote home of his astonishment at the long faces which flourished there, the heavy and measured gait,

the ritual silences at table or in the drawing-room, and the reproachful glance which greeted any attempt at gallantry or formal politeness. Wit was abhorred ; but humour which consisted in seeing things from a novel point of view, and sprang rather from oddity of character than from sharpness of mind—humour, gave great satisfaction. He found solace in reading Macbeth with Gray. At such times he spoke freely of himself, but Gray never responded ; some sixty years later, Bonstetten remembered this silence and wrote in his memoirs that it had the character of an unbridgeable abyss. But if Gray would not speak of the past, he spoke of the present with a despairing freedom. In March Bonstetten left for London, on his way home. Gray went with him as far as London, and on the eve of their going he wrote to Nicholls—

His cursed father will have him home in the autumn, and he must pass thro France to improve his talents and morals. . . . I have seen (I own) with pleasure the efforts you have made to recommend me to him, *sed non ego credulus illis*, nor I fear, he neither. He gives me too much pleasure, and at least *an equal share* of inquietude. . . . I have never met with so extraordinary a Person. God bless him ! I am unable to talk to you about any thing else, I think.

Bonstetten for his part must have caught something of the urgency and terror of Gray's feelings, for he wrote to his mother regretting that 'no sooner have I at last found a friend than I must lose him, and fall back into that dark solitude where I am the prey of vice and of every sort of human misery.' On March the 23rd Gray, by his own account, 'packed him up with my own hands in the Dover-machine at four o'clock in the morning.' They never met again. For Gray, the last candles of hope and excitement had been blown quite out. Cambridge had never seemed so horrible, nor his solitary evenings so heavy and flat. 'Pray let the next you send me,' he wrote to Nicholls, 'be half and blind, dull, unapprehensive and wrong-headed.' Nicholls replied, 'I am concerned that I cannot pass my life with him, I never met with anyone that pleased and suited me so well' ; but for all that he did not seem quite able to seize Gray's position, and the poet wrote again to say, 'I thought my mysteries were but too easy to explain ; however you must have a little patience, for I can only hazard word of mouth.' Gray was allusive even in respect of his own inmost distress, and he recalled the lines from *King John* :

Since the birth of Cain, the first male child,
To him that did but yesterday suspire,
There was not such a gracious creature born.

Bonstetten in his letters was vivacious and sensitive, but his distress at parting from Gray does not seem to have survived for long in the gay amenity of Parisian society. His feelings, though deep and

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spontaneous, were rarely lasting. As if perceiving this, Gray wrote to beg that 'the stream of custom, passion and ill company' should not be allowed to bear Bonstetten away. 'Shall the jargon of French sophists,' he went on, 'the allurements of painted women *comme il faut*, or the vulgar caresses of prostitute beauty, the property of all that can afford to purchase it, induce you to give up a mind and body, by nature distinguished from all others, to folly, idleness, disease, and vain remorse?' Such moments of rhetoric were rare ; the general tone of his letters is that of solitary grief, the numbed quietness of despair. 'Never did I feel to what a tedious length the few short moments of our life may be extended by impatience and expectation till you had left me. . . . I am grown old in the compass of less than three weeks.' From the sixth book of *The Republic* he transcribed Plato's account of 'a genius truly inclined to philosophy.' The catalogue of high qualities, joined to the external advantages of wealth, nobility, strength and beauty, described for him exactly the gage which Bonstetten had flung down before the world. 'If you have ever met,' he wrote, 'with the portrait sketched out by Plato, you will know it again : for my part (to my sorrow) I have had that happiness : I see the principal features, and I foresee the dangers with a trembling anxiety.' Throughout the spring of 1770 he noted as usual the appearance of the first violet, the song of the wren and the spreading of gooseberry leaves ; but letters to Paris belied this customary interest. 'My life now,' he would say, 'is but a perpetual conversation with your shadow' ; or 'I am employed in pushing the tedious hours along, and wishing to annihilate them ; the more I strive, the heavier they move and the longer they grow.' He never recovered the earlier balance of his life ; this, like some water-clock, had been mortally jarred. Bonstetten wrote from time to time during the winter of 1770-1, and in the spring suggested that Gray and Nicholls should visit him in Switzerland. Gray by then had neither health nor spirits for such a venture, though for medicinal reasons he steeled himself to attempt some lesser journey. 'Travel I must,' he wrote in May 1771, 'or cease to exist.' He travelled as far as London, seemed to pick up a little, returned to Cambridge ; and there, on May the 30th, he died.

Bonstetten's later life provides an ironical gloss upon the cruel stanza of his effect on Gray. He lived to a great age, preserved his vivacity and charm intact, and came to symbolise for younger people the extinct grace and robust prejudice of the eighteenth century. Chateaubriand's *Martyrs* seemed to him 'the most boring and ill-constructed work in existence.' For German philosophy he had the liveliest dislike, comparing it to an ugly and imperious coquette whom it would be fatal to approach too closely. He became a close friend of Madame de Staël, and the *amant de cœur* of the Comtesse d'Albany,

wife of Prince Charles Edward. He enjoyed everything—the acting of Talma, Appian's history of the Civil War, a course of geology lectures, the air on the Simplon. He took up fantastic schemes for trebling the potato crop ; he published a long essay of Virgilian topography. Suddenly in 1810 he felt the need of that blinding happiness which had passed for a moment before Gray's eyes. 'The older one gets,' he wrote, 'the more necessary happiness becomes. It is the decisive factor in one's last years—either one has it, and lives, or one is without it, and wishes only to die.' Forty years earlier the truth of this reflection had been borne out ; and it may be apt to put at the end of a brief study of Thomas Gray the tailpiece which Richard Bentley made in 1751 for the *Hymn to Adversity*—a tailpiece portraying the presiding angel of Gray's life, the figure of Melancholy.



[The headpiece and tailpiece of this article are reproduced from *Designs by Mr. R. Bentley for Six Poems by Mr. T. Gray*, published by R. Dodsley. MDCCCLIII.]

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Beyond the Valley

BY RICHARD WYNDHAM

It was late afternoon when I reached the deep valley that separated me from the little town of Kalat-el-Meskine where I had been told I would find one of the best hotels in the Lebanon. I could see the town clearly, its minaret symmetrically capped by a stork's nest and its three Christian churches—red-tiled boxes each with a miniature belfry and oversized bell. The golden stone-built houses, Venetian in architecture with high pointed windows, rose in tiers almost to the crusader castle walls that followed the highest contour of the hill. What I took to be the hotel was some distance outside the town, and just across the valley from where I was standing. As the crow flies, it was not more than a mile away. But the mule-track ahead suggested at least two more hours' tough walking. My legs rather than my eyes followed its course, as it wound through the terraced vineyards and pollarded mulberry trees to the long span of the Roman bridge which crossed the dried-up river-bed. Beyond the river, it was lost to view among olive groves, but reappeared close to the village—a zigzagging flight of steps cut out of the rock. As I said, it was my legs that took all this in ; for I had been walking since daylight over rough mountains. They also protested that this town was right off the route—and that tomorrow I should have to retrace my steps. Normally I should not even have considered going out of my way for the sake of a roof ; most nights I had dined off a melon, white goat's cheese and a half-bottle of arak, then slept under a trellis of vines—their motionless leaves cut as sharply as a Victorian silhouette against the sheen of the Milky Way. And the first rays of sun would dry out the dew.

But I had been travelling as a gambler without a mackintosh, without even a change of clothes : with nothing, in fact, but the khaki shorts and bush-shirt I was wearing. For three weeks I had been in luck, but the first November clouds were moving lower and lower down the slopes of the mountains. I picked some grapes and, for half an hour, sat enjoying the superb luxury that not even war-time restrictions can take from man—the ecstasy of indecision, an ecstasy that was ended by a little quick shower of rain.

There were waterfalls in the valley falling, as slender as icicles, to be caught in mud-walled irrigation channels and to flow on from terrace to terrace down to the dry river-bed, where the oleanders were in bloom. The vines were trellised between the pollarded mulberry trees, so that each small garden was screened. And from

every garden—from behind the screen—came the voices of unseen children picking the mulberry leaves for their silkworms: little treble voices anxious to air the English they had learnt at school: 'Hello . . . Where are you going? . . . Thank you . . . good night.' Beside the track, tired donkeys were being loaded with huge panniers of pomegranates and grapes. The sun had gone, and the air was scented with myrtle and figs.

It was still daylight when I reached the town; but it was deserted, and I wandered alone up and down the paved streets. They were so precipitous they had been stepped, with a runnel in the centre to carry away, down to the valley, the winter rains and, in early summer, the melting snow.

There was a small arcaded square like an Italian piazza with a fountain in the centre, and from between the slender arches shops cascaded melons on to the pavements; amber-coloured sweet melons and water melons of dark jade. Every shop was identical—it could not have been otherwise, for each supplied all the needs of mankind. From every ceiling hung the same assortment: household utensils beaten out of army petrol-tins, sandals and coils of rope; yard-long candles for churches; white cheeses in muslin; and clusters of minute birds with russet plumage and brick-red breasts; boot-laces and ties; strings of garlic; fresh dates as glossy and scarlet as varnished fingernails. And each dark interior was divided by the same invisible partitions: in one corner was a barber's chair facing an ornate, fly-blown mirror with photographs stuck in the frame of Churchill, Stalin and De Gaulle; in the opposite corner, a little bar selling cigarettes, arak, wine and pistachio nuts, some chairs, and a table with a backgammon board. The centre of the floor was reserved for bulk stuff sold by weight: sacks of potatoes, millet, barley, olives and charcoal grouped around a weighing machine. In the front of every shop, behind the pile of melons, fruit and vegetables were heaped on wooden trestles; purple and green figs, purple and white grapes, pomegranates and oranges, pale green cabbages and deep crimson, scarlet and yellow tomatoes, wine-coloured aubergines, and sour-green limes. And against the lintels of every door sugar-canapes were stacked—their long mauve stems tufted with greenery like pantomime palms.

Only one shop differed from the others, since it had crammed in the local telephone exchange: a contraption with different coloured plugs and numbered sockets, and one of those rococo hand-instruments that used to survive in French provincial hotels. Now and again the bell gave a feeble trilling tinkle—but without conviction. For everyone had seen the clouds closing down on the mountains, and knew that the peasants were all in the valley, picking the mulberry leaves and saving the last pomegranates, the last grapes, melons

and figs. It was dusk, and the scent of the fruits of the earth filled the silent square.

Somewhere not far away, a great clanking bell started to ring the Angelus. I walked towards the sounds. Outside one of the Christian churches, a youth in a pink 'European' suit was heaving on a rope, allowing it to lift him two or three feet off the ground with each upward swing. As soon as he saw me, he let go, leaving the clamour he had aroused to die a slow spasmodic death, and exclaimed, 'Good evening, friend, may we converse ?'

I said, 'Converse about what ?'

He said, 'To make better my English spoke.'

I told him he could converse as far as the 'Grand Excelsior Hotel,' if he could take me there ; for I had quite lost my bearings, it was getting dark, and had come on to rain. I was now looking forward to a night of some luxury : a hot bath, a well-cooked meal, a bottle of wine, and—from the boy's description—I should not be disappointed. The 'Grand Excelsior,' he told me, was so celebrated that princes and pashas from Cairo visited the hotel for their summer holidays. But when he left me at the gate, I wondered whether he had not, in typically eastern fashion, agreed to guide me without any idea of the way ; there was no answer to my ring and knock, though I tried several doors. For a smart hotel, it was a rambling building with a central cluster of three great venetian windows opening on to a stone balcony, and a top story still unfinished and roofless with a frieze of iron whiskers waiting, for a quarter of a century, to tie in the last layers of stone. It stood in a garden, already soppy, which I began to explore, knocking at side doors and shouting, for it was now raining hard. Not until I came to the terrace which overhung the valley was I reassured when, kicking through the damp dead leaves, I found a circle of concrete dance-floor under a vine arbour and, among the crimson leaves, strings of broken fairy lights. Nearby stood a locked pavilion which in the summer had been a small cocktail bar ; looking through the window, I saw some broken bottles, a pile of tinfoil capsules, and left-over gala favours, wrapped in cellophane, that looked like painted fans.

Now I knew for certain that this was not a private house. I tried the garden door that led to the dance-floor and found it unlocked. I had reached shelter—but little else ; I pushed bells, and shouted into vacancy, until I began to wonder if the dance-floor were not a relic of some venture opened seasons ago and since abandoned. But when, after wandering through half-dark corridors, I found my way into the room with the venetian windows, I saw without doubt that this was the 'Grand Excelsior Hotel.' The layout was a replica, though on a larger scale, of every other hotel in the near-Orient, where the whole of life centres round, and the bedrooms open on

to, the one main *salon*. Here the guests sit all day in a circle, drinking their small cups of coffee and playing with their amber beads. Only after sunset, some of the younger people venture out of doors to dance.

The huge room was without furniture, except for some thirty ornate upholstered chairs forming a complete circle around nothing ; beside each chair stood a Damascus inlaid table with its ashtray of filigree brass. The walls had been frescoed by a naïf local painter to please Egyptian guests, with views of the pyramids and palms against a pink sky, canals with sailing caiques, and the Sphinx bearing an odd resemblance to a Hittite lion. Beyond the circle of chairs were two Russian billiard tables and a ping-pong table without a net. In one corner of the room the garden chairs and tables had been piled neatly, four chairs on each table—a nostalgic reminder of a boulevard *café* in Paris at dawn. Stacked around the walls were dismembered beds : spring mattresses and brass-knobbed iron frames. Bedrooms opened into the *salon*, ten on each side with numbered doors.

Deciding to choose for myself before it became completely dark, I knocked tentatively on two or three doors and peered in. Each room was bare of furniture, its floor-space given up to drying figs and raisins, and boxes of silk-worms. The mystery of the 'Grand Excelsior Hotel' was solved ; the season was over and, according to custom, the peasants had moved into the house for the winter. I was the only guest. And now, when all the daylight had gone from the windows, I heard the peasants returning from the valley, some in noisy boots, others in wooden clogs with a pretty xylophone note : gruff voices and children's wrangling, laughing, singing—dispersing through basements and up and down staircases and passages—some coming nearer, some fading away. It was now too dark to find a bell ; I called out and, after a few minutes, I was heard. There was silence, whispering, then a young woman came up the stairs carrying a hurricane lamp which caused the circle of chairs to cast slow-moving shadows like great wheel-spokes. She spoke good English—like many Lebanese, she had immigrated as a girl to America—and regretted that I had found the hotel empty. It was particularly unfortunate that I should have been left in darkness ; but all the town's electric light had failed—that often happened ; no doubt the lights would soon come on again. She explained that they didn't expect guests much after September when the season ended ; but it would be quite convenient for me to stay ; they kept always a few rooms furnished for casual visitors. She hoped that I wouldn't object to having my meals in the *salon* ; the dining-room was closed. All this was depressing, but I had no choice—with the rain thrashing the high windows and not a light in the streets of the town outside. She called down the stairs ; and, after a long pause, a very old waiter without a tie came up, carrying a candle and a

bunch of keys. From his yawns and half-awake expression I suspected he had all the time been sleeping somewhere in the house. I chose the first room that he unlocked.

II

I ordered an early dinner, and had settled down in the *salon* to write up my diary by candlelight when all the lights in the hotel flashed on, creating another world of brittle and unearthly brilliance ; so that, dining alone at my small table, I felt like an exiled monarch encircled by empty chairs of state—except that the old waiter still wore no tie, and, in the background, rose the great dump of hibernating garden furniture and dismembered bedsteads. At intervals the lights went out for a few minutes and came on again ; but I had my candle and managed to settle down to writing. While I was drinking my coffee, I heard once more the sound of peasants moving through the corridors and up the stairs ; whereupon the waiter produced a scent-spray of the kind used by barbers and perfumed the room heavily. One by one they came in to join me, picking a chair out of the dump (for nobody dared to sit on the upholstered chairs which remained empty and aloof). Apart from the woman who spoke English and her husband (whom I took to be caretakers), they were simple peasants, obviously not in any way connected with the hotel, who had been allowed to stay during the long month of winter, and helped to look after the house and till the land. Perhaps they all belonged to the same family ; grandfathers, uncles, cousins, husbands and wives and children. Related or not, every generation was represented from the very old, unchanged in appearance since Biblical times, to the very young, wearing their best 'European' clothes, in a guest's honour. And there was an amusing idiot boy.

The old waiter, having finished his spraying, joined us ; and we formed a small circle within the larger circle of empty chairs. The lights continued their antics as if some crazy film-director insisted on taking and retaking the same two sequences. The scene by candlelight was normal : one that I had witnessed most evenings of my walk, when the peasants had come in to join me in some little *café* behind a shop. And they were asking much the same questions : when would the war end ? How old was I ? And why did I walk ? When there was a bus ? They rolled and smoked endless cigarettes, lighting them from the candle, their deep-shadowed semitic faces caught by the orange light of the flame. But, every time the electric lights flashed on, the group appeared farcical. What could be more incongruous than this circle of earthy, blinking peasants sitting round a candle, in the blazing *salon* surrounded by a circle of vacant gilded chairs ?

When our only interpreter, the caretaker's wife, left us, we gave

up by mutual agreement any attempt at conversation, and I went on with my writing while they drank coffee, speaking now and again among themselves in undertones. A goatherd had brought his reed pipes, and they sang softly together ; the song was no more than a hum. A wind had risen, blowing the rain in gusts against the high panes. Then it would drop altogether, and the peasants would sit in silence—they had been talking and singing to drown their fear of the storm. The rambling house became so silent, I could no longer write.

It was during one of these periods of silence that I heard a movement in room No. 5 : the twang of a bedspring, the shifting of a chair, a yawn. The lights were on when the door opened, but the figure emerged out of a pitch-black room. He walked very slowly, murmured some sort of general greeting to the room at large, sat down in one of the gilded chairs, and started flicking backwards and forwards through his fingers a string of splendid amber beads. I understood he must be a guest. He was a man probably still in the 'thirties although his hair was grey ; his calm face was distinguished, indeed beautiful. Over six foot, he looked exceedingly strong. He wore a white poplin suit, which could have only been cut in Cairo, and round his neck a knotted silk scarf. I understood he must be a guest, and made some conventional remark in French, but he paid no attention ; whereupon the idiot boy put his fingers in his ear to show, with exaggerated pantomime, that the man was completely deaf. The boy, I thought, was certainly a half-wit. But, reading my thoughts, he continued with a second piece of pantomime—covering his eyes with both hands to suggest total blindness.

The old waiter went out and returned with a tray of *café au lait*, toast and butter, and placed them beside the new arrival. About nine o'clock, the peasants began to wander off to their beds in attics and basements, and I and the other guest were left alone. I had got into the mood of working, as one so often does in a strange environment and for a time almost forgot my companion, as he sat there sipping his coffee and carefully buttering his toast. When the lights went out, we had our candle ; but, only when the candle unexpectedly flickered and died, did I feel the dead weight of the utter silence and the utter darkness in which he lived. So far as he was concerned, the room was still brightly lit, the hotel was still populous. The chairs were not empty ; they were occupied by a circle of other guests drinking coffee and talking. Children were playing Russian billiards and noisy ping-pong. Out in the garden, young people were dancing under the stars and the coloured fairy-lights. He did not know that autumn leaves had fallen—perhaps he wondered if the moon was full. He did not know that he was sitting alone in the dark with me.

I waited for the lights to come on again ; but, as time passed, I suspected that they had been switched off for the night. I had only one match and, when I struck it, it behaved like most Lebanese matches—flared for a second and went out. I had time to see the prim circle of chairs and the calm detached figure buttering a piece of toast ; then the room became blacker than it had been before. I tried groping my way to my bedroom ; but, as may happen even in a room which one has known all one's life, I immediately lost my way and stumbled into a gilt chair, overturning it with a crash. Illogically, I still expected him to make some exclamation—he must have heard the noise. But it was I who heard him : he was munching his last bit of toast and, a minute later, took out his string of beads. Cautiously I found another chair and sat down ; for I now knew that I dared not move in the darkness. Supposing I fell over him !—sprawling suddenly into his tranquil, silent life : an inexplicable attack from one of those guests whom he imagined sitting peacefully round. Apart from any respect for his feelings, I imagined all the terror of our struggle in the darkness, on the floor, among the chairs—grappling with a man far stronger than myself, fighting back only in desperate self-defence, never able to explain that he need have no fear. After an hour or so, I finally concluded the lights had been switched off, and resigned myself to the prospect of a night in my chair, listening to the monotonous clicking as he slithered the beads through his fingers—two and one, two and one, two and one. I must have dozed ; for I did not hear him strike a match to light a cigarette, and he had already blown it out before I had time to make a dash towards my room. He finished the cigarette, stubbed it out in the ashtray. I heard him get up and walk slowly, but with assurance, through the darkness to his door. The sound of it closing gave me back bearings. I knew that it was opposite mine, and after a few minutes' groping, I reached my own.

III

Next morning, I was called early by the old waiter ; but already the peasants were on their way down to the valley, and the hotel was empty except for the forgotten guest. He was sitting alone in the same chair, smoking a cigarette, and still lazily flicking at his string of beads. He had changed into a dark suit and, instead of a silk scarf, wore a tie and collar. Automatically, I bowed and said good-bye. I wondered whether I was right in leaving him. Perhaps he had been forgotten by some absent-minded relative, even purposely abandoned ? Or was he as happy in this empty hotel as he would be anywhere, and staying on until the cold weather warned him that the season had come to an end ?

On my way out I passed the glass doors of the dining-room.

The room was not in use ; tables and chairs had been stacked at one end—except one table which had been laid for a meal. The old waiter was giving it the professional finishing touches, folding the napkin into a fantastic shape, straightening knives and forks by a millimetre, flicking away imaginary crumbs. He drew the cork from a half-finished bottle of wine. As I left, he had begun to spray scent.

It was a cloudless morning, though the earth was still sodden and smelt of the night's rain. I was glad that, after all, I had crossed the valley ; the slender falls now shot from the cliffs in arcs of thunder ; little white donkeys, ears well forward, tails swinging, trotted down the track, to cross the Roman bridge which now spanned a torrent that swayed the stubby oleander bushes like river-weeds. A boy on a young mule cantered fearlessly down the steep stone steps. He threw back his head, and I could see his throat throbbing like a young thrush's as he sent out his message to the other hill—a legend : a jaunty hymn of the liturgy of St. James the Less. The sun rose over the far hills, touching only this side of the valley and making the earth steam ; and all three miniature belfries united to fling their cracked jangle across the valley into the shadow, to be flung back as a muted clamour mingled with the forlorn notes of goat bells, with the music of a wandering goat-herd's pipes and the echo of a hymn. Sounds and echoes of a cloudless morning ! But the voices of the children singing out from behind their screens of vines were echoes of the twilight. For their English carried only one greeting : ' . . . Where are you going ? . . . Thank you . . . *Good night.*'

Beyond the bridge, spray from cascades fell cold on glossy leaves ; the mauve shadow of the under-hill had the deep bloom of a sloe. I climbed quickly up the steep mule-path to reach the sun. I came to the place where yesterday I had stood undecided ; and, though the path was still in shadow, I paused for a farewell glance at the town across the valley : golden tiers of floodlit houses, their venetian windows flashing back the morning sun—except for one house : the tall central windows of the 'Grand Excelsior Hotel' were shuttered. Only then did I grasp the full meaning of the forgotten guest's existence—of last night's white coat and *café au lait*, of the dark suit this morning, of the table and the half-bottle of wine in the dining-room, the sleepy old waiter and his industrious scent-spray. Not only was he unconscious that the season had finished and that the hotel was empty ; but somehow time had slipped out of gear. It must have occurred very gradually, day by day—so gradually that he had never become aware of the change. As far as the peasants were concerned, I felt certain there had been no criminal intention—they were far too simple for that, and too afraid. Their worst motive must

have been one of convenience ; the arrangement suited them, since these topsy-turvy hours left them free to do their work all day in the valley. The most likely solution was that oriental laziness had united with an oriental's complete disregard of time. And so, day by day, *his* time had been allowed to lag. Even their petty subterfuges—scent spray, and closed shutters to keep out the heat of the morning sun—they, too, fitted in perfectly with the native characteristics of a primitive but crafty people, whose memories were soaked in centuries of fear : someone would punish them if they were found out : the whole village might be massacred as in the time of their grandfathers. How often had the priest warned them ! Whatever the reason—he had come out of his room the night before to breakfast and, while I was asleep, someone, no doubt the old waiter, had served his luncheon. The table in the dining-room was being set for dinner . . .

I climbed quickly up the steep mule-track out of the valley till I reached the sun, found my foot-path winding through broken swords of asphodel, went on my way. The sun was up and strong. From across the valley still came the clamour of Christian bells, ringing for the feast-day of a local saint. From the depth of the valley came an echo of the twilight ; the same treble voices called after me, fainter and still fainter ' . . . Thank you . . . Good night.'

My path began to fall gently through a pine wood that smelt of resin, where the last cicada sang, though feebly, to the warmth of a last autumn day. With each step, the tiers of sunlit buildings sank lower and lower behind the ridge of silvery rock that had become my near-horizon. Of all the buildings in the little town, the hotel 'Grand Excelsior' was the last to vanish. Even when the walls of the crusader castle had disappeared, it stood out between the tree-trunks, with empty balconies, shuttered windows, and terraces of dead ornamental gardens basking against a pale, almost colourless, sky. The solitary guest would soon be going to bed.

[This episode is to be published in a collection of studies of the Middle East, by Major Richard Wyndham, which will be published during 1946.]

Introduction to Middlesbrough

BY JOHN PIPER

'Middlesbrough is frequently regarded as one of the triumphs of the nineteenth century, but there are some who could find it in their hearts to wish it had never been built,' says an ordinarily respectful present-day guide to the North Riding of Yorkshire. It is entirely a nineteenth-century creation: the sole relic of an earlier age is a twelfth-century font in St. Hilda's church. The parish in 1821 was dreary and swampy, and had four farms and a population of 40. In 1921 the population was 131,070. The city is necklaced by the Tees, which here makes its last big loop before reaching the North Sea. At its back is some of Yorkshire's finest scenery, with elmy pastures and cornlands spreading away past Stokesley and Guisborough to the Cleveland, with Roseberry Topping—as majestic and mysterious a mountain as Pennine Ingleborough—fathering the distant scene. Travelling the road from Richmond to Whitby on a summer evening one sees Roseberry Topping conspicuous against the greenish eastern sky, and away to the left by the Tees mouth and the sea, Middlesbrough, on a great smoke-clouded flat in a brownish-yellow haze.

The making of the Stockton and Darlington railway in 1825 (locomotive No. 1, of that date, is still to be seen at Darlington railway station) is the most important early landmark in railway history. The chief local railway advocate was a Quaker, Edward Pease. Merchants of Stockton ridiculed the idea and did not take up 20 shares between them, but the Pease and other Quaker families persisted, and opened the 'Quaker's line'; and their enterprise did not stop there. Three or four years later they bought 500 acres of land on the right bank of the Tees for 20s. an acre, lengthened the railway from Stockton and erected some wharves, and there and then began a flourishing coal port. The first Middlesbrough coal ship put to sea in 1830. When the coal trade fell off, owing to competition from rival ports, the developers began to manufacture iron, the Cleveland Hills supplying ore. Serious waves of depression were somehow ridden, and by the eighties of the century the author of *Murray's Handbook* saw here epitomised the Victorian romance of industry. 'The Bessemer Converters,' he wrote, 'huge iron cylinders from which the red-hot steel is poured out, with coruscations more brilliant than fireworks; the huge shears for cutting iron, the rolling mills and steam hammers, are all causes of wonder and admiration. The labour is ceaseless day and night, being lighted at night by electric light.'

With iron came a heavy increase in population, the building of

churches, the passing of Improvement Acts and the laying-out of the North Square at St. Hilda's. This town was planned on sensible and spacious lines, gridiron-fashion, like an American town, the streets crossing each other at right-angles, main streets debouching on the square. Today, the square at St. Hilda's is one of the most remarkable of industrial town sights. It is deserted, shops are boarded up, many houses windowless, many lots vacant, dust whirls in the wind past the unpainted house-fronts : it looks as if a plague had visited it. This is not the effect of depression, or of war and bombs (Middlesbrough has been little bombed), but the result of the rapid and uncontrollable growth of the place which induced the running up of subsidiary rows of houses in parallel streets between the original ones, so that the whole district developed into an uninhabitable slum, and has now ceased to be a centre of population. New and grander public buildings began to rise in the late sixties outside the St. Hilda's area, and the town—stopped by the river from growing in that direction—grew, still in roughly rectangular blocks, to the south.

From the top of a bus going from near the station down Linthorpe Road you can trace the development in outline ; you can see the attempts at wide boulevards, obfuscated by uncooperative townsmen, and, in succession, the office and shop blocks of the sixties, seventies and eighties, the more variegated-tiled villas, the more wilfully Italianate residences, the more shrubberied gardens, until you reach the urban-fringe houses of pre-last-war date, the desirable semi-detached villas of the nineteen-twenties, and finally the housing estates of the thirties. In all this it is not so much unlike anywhere else, but everything is in sharper focus than usual ; for, as the place grew up, nowhere were there old-town suburbs and outskirts, or wandering approach roads to confuse the issue. For these reasons, and because of the awful warning of depopulated St. Hilda's, it is a prototype from which city planners of the present and future can learn a great deal. Fortunately, it is the subject of intensive study at the moment by a group of people working, under Mr. Max Lock, on an elaborate and intelligent Survey and Plan. Whether or not this plan is adopted wholly or in part, the survey will have far more than local significance, and it is essential that it should be published fully and clearly.

After the Linthorpe Road bus ride, the next most promising plan for the visitor is to take a walk on the slag-tips across the Tees. These form the only land in the district that is more than sixteen or twenty feet above sea-level, and from them the city is seen as well as it can be seen as a whole. Beyond the foreground of grey and red-ochre slag, and beyond the broken Port Clarence works, lies Middlesbrough again in its brown haze, with blackened St. Hilda's spire, Victorian towers and cupolas and the handsome Transporter Bridge making the horizon more prickly than it already is with its chimneys and blast

furnaces and colliery gear. Away to the left are the docks and the estuary ; to the right, a giant works of the great employers of present-day Middlesbrough labour, Imperial Chemical Industries. At intervals across the seaward cornfields are the derricks of salt workings. If there is not enough romance in the sight, there is in the sound, that drifts across the flats, of whistlings, clangings and rushings. On a siding near here, and not far from a derelict Assyrian-style building that belonged to the Port Clarence Iron Foundry, stand some early railway wagons of beautiful design. They are quite possibly Stockton and Darlington originals ; at any rate they are of the authentic early East Coast design, which grew from the old ' corf ' which was drawn by human beings (often females) on wooden tramlines in the main roads underground. At least two of them should be put in a museum before they disintegrate : two, because the shape of the space between them as they stand buffered together is of a studied Hansiatic elegance.

A striking feature of the streets of central Middlesbrough is the richness and elaborateness of the public-houses. They present their grand or gaudy façades at every turn, on corner sites and island sites, in main streets and side streets. The rise of the gin palace coincided with the rise of Middlesbrough, and its pubs deserve a monograph. The grandeur may be a matter of a flashily-tiled entrance and some elaborate scarlet letters on a green front (as in the Zetland Hotel, near the station), or a single-storey, heavily-columned front in black and gold (as at the Eagle Hotel, St. Hilda's) ; nowhere could the Victorian public-house style be better studied in a small area. Chapels are prominent, too. Churches seem less prominent, though there are twenty-one Church of England churches and the Roman Catholics have a cathedral and six other places of worship. The St. Hilda's Ward has a very large Roman Catholic population. There was an influx of Irish labour a hundred years ago, and ' the deep Irish upper lip ' is still prominent in Middlesbrough's streets.

The best building in the city is the old National Provincial Bank building, 1873, by John Gibson, now a warehouse. (What a beautiful small art gallery it would make !) Of the churches, the most interesting are St. Hilda's and St. Cuthbert's. But it is for atmosphere rather than architecture that the student of the nineteenth century should visit this smoke-pickled place. He should linger in the giant waiting hall of the station, then wander outside and look at the profuse iron-work that was intended to advertise the staple industry to every admiring visitor, then seek the Exchange, which cost £35,000 in 1868, and in which are some umbrella stands of cast iron that two men can hardly lift. After that, the walk may take any direction : the atmosphere of the years of forced and awkward growth will soon be felt ; the background of Victorian compassion and cruelty, of aspiration fogged

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[From a water colour by John Piper.]

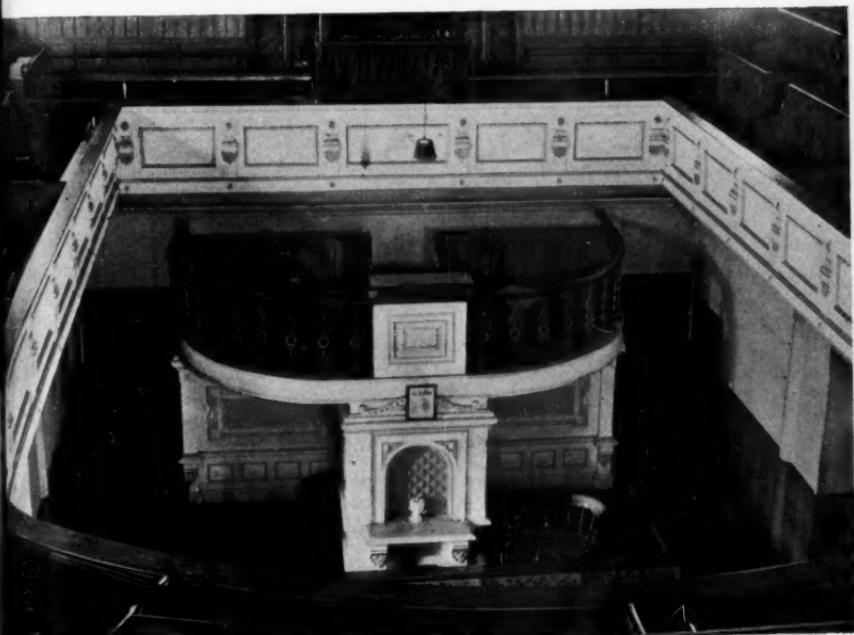
MIDDLESBROUGH FROM THE SLAG-TIPS



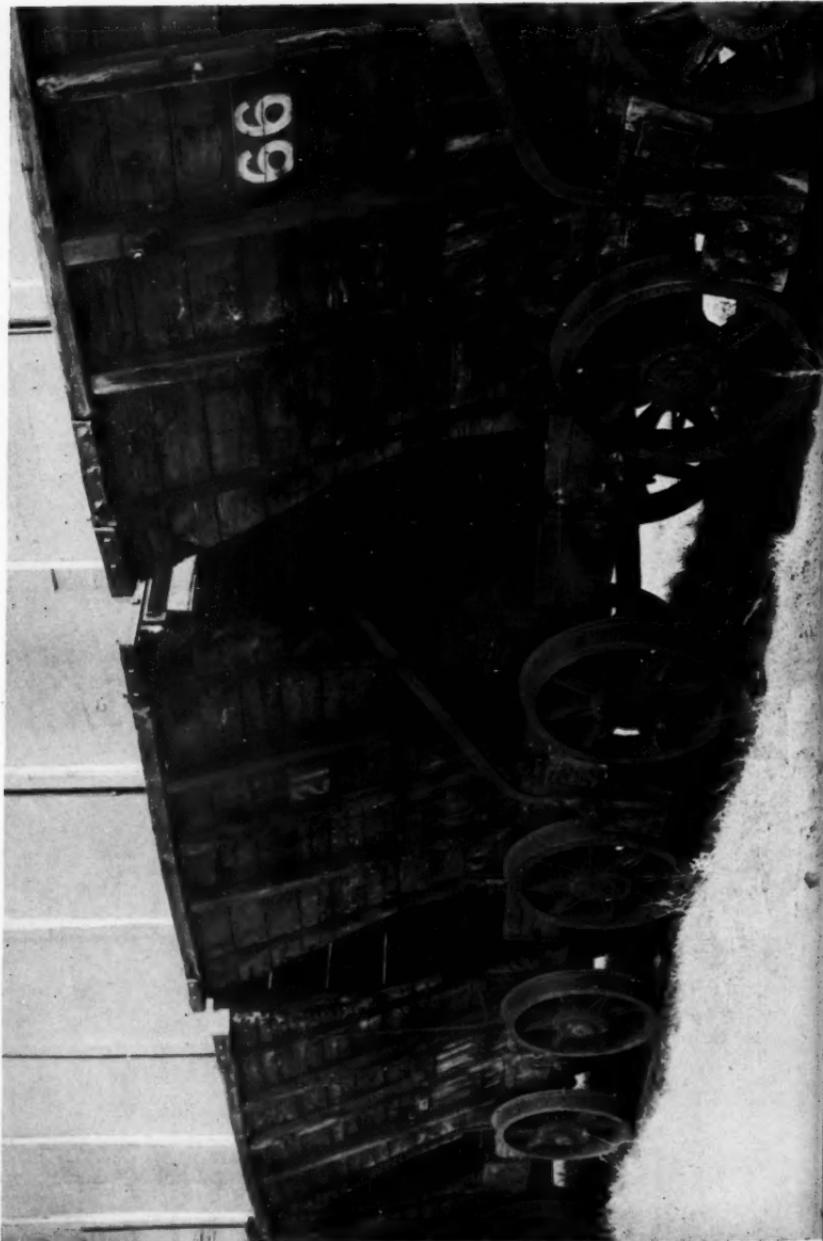
From 'The Builder': By courtesy of R.I.B.A.]

EXCHANGE AND CLUB BUILDINGS, MIDDLESBROUGH-ON-TEES
NATIONAL PROVINCIAL BANK OF ENGLAND, MIDDLESBROUGH

THE CE



THE CENTENARY CHAPEL (WESLEYAN), MIDDLESBROUGH



EARLY COAL-TRUCKS AT PORT CLARENCE

by commercialism that belong to this over-developed, half-decayed place. Gissing could have done it justice.

* * * *

SOME MIDDLESBROUGH BUILDINGS

Centenary Chapel, North Square, St. Hilda's, 1837. St. Hilda's church, John and Benjamin Green of Newcastle, architects, 1839. Original Town Hall, North Square, c. 1840. Town Hall, Albert Road, G. G. Hoskins of Darlington, architect, 1840. Ironmasters and General Exchange, near railway station, Charles J. Adams, architect, 1868 (cost £35,000). Public Library, 1870. Cemetery Chapel, Linthorpe Road, Greek, 1855. National Provincial Bank (now a warehouse), Cleveland Street, John Gibson, architect, 1873. Railway station, 1877. Roman Catholic Cathedral, Goldie and Child, architects, 1878. Clarence Works (Assyrian style), c. 1860. All Saints, G. E. Street, 1878. St. Aidan, Pearson, 1902. St. Columba's and St. Cuthbert's both by Temple Moore and both of 1903.

[My thanks are due to Mr. Herbert Simon, Miss Elspeth Robinson and F/O Patrick Horsbrugh for information.]

Monkey

*A new chapter by Arthur Waley, dedicated to
Violet Gordon Woodhouse, in gratitude for fairy music.*

[This is an additional chapter of the sixteenth-century Chinese novel, *Monkey*. It is an invention, not a translation. Readers of the CORNHILL will remember Mr. Arthur Waley's translation of the original Chinese text, published in 1942.]

So the four of them travelled westward for many months and came at last to a great plain. They had been crossing it for half a day when clouds gathered, and it began to rain. No shelter was in sight and Tripitaka, though he was riding the white horse and was the only one whose feet were dry, became very depressed. 'How far do you think it is to India?' he asked. 'From China to India is 147,000 miles,' said Monkey. 'And how far have we travelled already?' asked Tripitaka. 'Master,' said Monkey, 'that depends upon your thoughts. Judging by the fuss you have been making about a few drops of auspicious rain, I should say you have not even started for India. But if India were truly in your heart, you would only have to turn your head to see the Holy Mountain of Buddha rise up at your side.'—'It's all very well for you to talk like that Brother,' said Pigsy, 'but I have tried turning my head and all I see is the luggage on my back.'

'If there were a tree,' said Sandy, 'we could take shelter.'

They travelled on in silence for an hour or two, with the clouds gathering close about them, and suddenly at the roadside there was something dark, that turned out to be a clump of ancient trees. Tripitaka was for taking shelter. 'Have you looked at the calendar?' asked Pigsy. 'Don't talk nonsense,' said Monkey. 'Why should the master look at the calendar?'—'If he hasn't looked at the calendar, how does he know today is a fast-day?' said Pigsy. 'I am going on to see if I can get some supper.'—'You two older disciples both have natures that are akin to water,' said Tripitaka. 'A little rain will not hurt you, and you had better go on and see if you can find a house. Sandy belongs to the desert and his nature is not attuned to moisture. He had better stay here with me under the trees.'

So that fool Pigsy, who was thinking only of his supper, trundled off into the rain. Monkey stayed behind for a while to wring out his little jacket, and then at a bound disappeared into the clouds.

Tripitaka, Sandy and the white horse had not sat long under the trees when the rain began to trickle through the leaves. 'Does it rain in India?' asked Sandy. 'I have read in the Vinaya of the

Four Divisions,' said Tripitaka, ' that on the Holy Mountain it rains every night, just at midnight, for as long as it takes to milk a cow. Then the rain stops and when dawn breaks, the whole sky is clear.'

Master and disciple had spent a good while under the trees, talking of this and that, when they heard a sound of footsteps on the road. Presently a figure came towards them, but they did not know whether it was man or woman, young or old. For the head was covered by a shawl and the body was draped in a long cloak. But whether it was a man or a woman, young or old, this person (so it seemed) was certainly going to market. For under the cloak there bulged out something shaped like the body of a goose, and between the folds of the cloak they were able to see something that was long and bent at the end, like the neck of a goose. They had not to wait long before they knew that it was not a young man or an old man nor yet an old woman going to market, but a young girl. Look ! she takes off the shawl and what do they see ?

*Her brows were arched like the slender moon rising on its first night,
Her eyes gleamed like rivers caught in the sun's last ray.
Hair that billowed like the summer clouds, cheeks white as snow ;
Coral her lips, pearls her teeth, her neck a shaft of jade.*

' It is a woman ! ' said Sandy. ' Patroness,' said Tripitaka, ' although I am one who long ago left the World, in my youth I studied the Book of Ceremonies and read that of all precepts under Heaven none is more binding than that which separates men and women. If you shelter under these trees, my disciple and I must go out into the rain.'—' Master,' said Sandy, ' I come from the desert, where the book you mention is not known and each, whether man or woman, fends for himself as best he can. But how would it be if I were to hang the saddle-cloth on this long bough ? Then we could sit on the south side and the Patroness on the north side, with the saddle-cloth hung between us. Should we then be separated or not separated ? '

' How did this idea come into your head ? ' asked Tripitaka, astonished, ' did you think of it for yourself ? But I have read that there are those who know without learning, and it seems that you are one of them. I am fortunate indeed to have such a disciple.' So they arranged matters as Sandy had suggested.

Before long, there came from the north side of the saddle-cloth a sound like that of a stringed instrument being tuned. ' What noise is that ? ' asked Sandy. ' In the Middle Kingdom,' said Tripitaka, ' the sound made by geese is a harsh cackling. The goose that our Patroness is carrying to market has a delicate voice, silvery as the notes of a lute. That means that we are nearing the borders of the Western Land, where there is no clamour or discord.' Sandy peeped

over the saddle-cloth. 'Master,' he said, 'it is not a goose. It is a musical instrument with strings and a long neck bent back at the top.'—'According to what you say,' said Tripitaka, 'it seems that it is not a bird but a lute. This is a worldly instrument; moreover in the Vinaya, it says, "No monk or nun must ever listen to music." Whereupon Tripitaka put his fingers in his ears and Sandy obediently did the same.

When Monkey and Pigsy set off down the road in a very short time they came to a farm standing just off the roadside. Without stopping to ask any questions, they turned back to tell Tripitaka and Sandy of what they had found. You may well imagine their astonishment when they saw Tripitaka, sitting in front of the saddle-cloth, with his fingers pressed into his ears, and Sandy in just the same posture, while from beyond the cloth came the sound of lute-playing. 'Here's work for us to do,' cried Pigsy, brandishing his rake. 'This grove must be haunted by an evil spirit. There are some that lure men on by music.'—'Fool,' cried Monkey, 'I looked down at this grove when I was alighting and saw no baleful humour rise from the trees. Here is no evil spirit, but a good musician playing for our pleasure on the lute. Why are our Master and brother stopping their ears?' And he shouted to Tripitaka to ask what was afoot. But Tripitaka still kept his fingers in his ears and could not hear what Monkey was saying. Dear Monkey! By nature he was extremely impatient and rushing up to his Master he dragged down his hands and shouted, as though Tripitaka were still deaf, 'Why are you stopping up your ears?' At this point the player, disturbed by their conversation, broke off her tune and Tripitaka let his hands fall to his side. 'Disciple,' he said, reproachfully, 'I have told you before that you must not be so rough. These are my ears, not yours, and if I protect them, it is for a good reason. I am surprised that though you had the privilege of studying with the Patriarch Subodhi, you never learnt that monks and nuns are not allowed to listen to music.' Monkey laughed. 'Master,' he said, 'you have learnt the beginning and missed the end. I have never read the Vinaya of the Monks, but when I was a prisoner in the heart of the mountain, the Earth-spirit recited some parts of it to me and I remember this: "A monk must not listen to the beatings of drums, to singing, lute-playing or the clash of cymbals, but if he meets them on the road it is no sin." Was it on the road that you met this music or was it not on the road?'—'Disciple,' said Tripitaka, 'it certainly might count as on the road.'—'Master, do you know the story of Prince Idle?' asked Monkey. 'Dear Disciple,' said Tripitaka, 'no such person is mentioned in the scriptures and I do not wish to hear a profane story.'—'I daresay he is not mentioned in the common scriptures that are known in China,' said Monkey, 'but only in the Perfect Scriptures of the Western Land;

for I heard the story when I was studying with the great Patriarch Subhodi. One day he was lecturing on the Identity of Opposites. It was spring time and I was thinking of all the games I might have been playing with my monkey-followers at the Cave of the Water-Curtain, so I did not listen much to what the Patriarch said. Suddenly, I saw that everyone in the classroom was looking at me and heard the Patriarch call out, "The Disciple Aware-of-Vacuity will now give an abstract of what I have been saying."—"I don't think I could put it better or more concisely than you have done," I said. The Patriarch banged the desk with his ruler. "Disciple," he roared, "I had my eye on you the whole time and could see you were not listening at all. You are as bad as Prince Idle."—"And who was Prince Idle?" someone asked. "He was the son of the King of Benares," said the Patriarch Subodhi, "and was so idle and inattentive that his tutors could teach him nothing at all. One day his Chief Tutor, the Sage Nagarjuna, was trying to teach him that Buddha is, yet is not in all things. Nagarjuna had no sooner started on his explanation that a wild swan flew past the Palace window. The Prince leapt up, rushed to the window and clapping his hands cried 'He is there!' Nagarjuna pulled him back into his seat and began to explain that in the myriad creatures of the earth Buddha is, yet is not. He was just beginning to confute the arguments and counter-arguments of the Heretics and Doubters when a stag suddenly bounded over a myrtle-bush in the garden. The Prince started up, clapped his hands and cried 'He is there!' The tutor Nagarjuna then thought it would be better to leave the Infidels to their folly and he tried to get the Prince's attention by going straight to the heart of the subject. 'The nature of Buddha is thirteen-fold,' he began. But at that moment a troupe of butterflies led by the butterfly-king, Kusumadana, passed the window. The Prince rushed out into the garden and crying 'There He is!' ran after the butterflies till he was out of sight."

Here Monkey paused. 'Is that the end of the story?' asked Sandy. 'The Patriarch,' continued Monkey, 'declared that the rest of the story was not applicable to my case, and dismissed the class. But we all begged him to tell us what became of the Prince, and at last he consented. "It is true," he confessed, "that the book says: Mind your ends like your beginnings. So I will tell you the end. Prince Idle followed the butterflies far beyond the town and beyond his father's kingdom till he came at last to the mountain, where the Kinnara plays magic music on his harp. And listening to this music, while the butterflies, led by their king, danced in the air around, Prince Idle (suddenly stirred by the magic of the tune) knew that just as, though the harp is strings, ivory and wood, there is no music in the strings or in the ivory or wood, yet there is music in the harp,

so Buddha is in, yet is not in the ten thousand things of the world. Prince Idle too rose and danced with Kusumudana, the Butterfly King. Then he went back to the Palace, and was no longer known as Prince Idle but as Guhyajnatri, Knower of the Mystery." That is what the Patriarch Subodhi told us, and if instead of listening to the music of the Kinnara, the Prince had behaved like our Master and put his fingers in his ears, he would never have become Knower of the Mystery, but would have remained Prince Idle till his dying day.'

'Brother,' said Pigsy, 'while you stand gossiping here about princes and butterflies, the rain has stopped. The proverb says: "He who cares for his ears and not his mouth will never get to the journey's end." Let us waste no more time in talking, but all go on to the house along the road.'—'Disciple,' said Tripitaka, to Pigsy, 'as you are a married man, I think there is no harm in leaving you to escort this lady. We three will go ahead.'

'Reverend Sir,' asked the lady, while Pigsy was putting together his luggage, 'what is your name and what is the object of your journey?'—'Patroness,' said Pigsy, 'we who have left the World do not use name or surname. As for my journey, I am going to India to see Buddha and fetch Holy Scriptures. But only today my fellow-disciple mentioned that India is still 147,000 miles away; moreover, my fellow disciple teases me because my magic powers are less than his, and makes me carry all the luggage. I did a bit of farming before I left the World, and I have a good mind to settle down somewhere in this neighbourhood and let the others go on to India. The proverb says, "A farmer without a wife is like a steelyard without a weight." Are you willing or not willing?'—'Reverend Sir,' said the lady—

'How does one cut an axe-handle?
Without an axe it is impossible.
How does one take a wife?
Without a matchmaker she cannot marry.'

'Then again, you have taken the Vows and put away from you all thoughts of home and family. There are other reasons too' (and here she looked at Pigsy's long snout and flapping ears) 'but into these I need not enter.'—'As for the Vows,' said Pigsy, 'I arranged not to take them all. As for my face, perhaps it is not very handsome, but I am extremely strong and when it comes to carting manure . . .'—'Sir,' said the lady, interrupting him, 'there is an even better reason why I cannot stay here and marry you. My parents, during the great famine, sold me as concubine to a rich merchant who used me very ill. Now I have run away from him and as the price he paid was high, he has certainly set out in pursuit of me. I shall not be safe till I have reached another kingdom.'—'If you are in such a hurry,' said Pigsy, very disappointed, 'why did you bring this great band-box with you?' and he hoisted up the lute, staggering under it

as though it was very heavy.—‘Reverend Sir,’ said the lady, ‘you do not know. My parents brought me up to be a lute-player and this lute is my greatest treasure.’—‘I am not much to look at,’ said Pigsy, ‘but I have a merciful heart. I will carry your great treasure and you shall carry the worthless trifles that are in this pack.’

When the others came to the farm the people there gladly gave them shelter. ‘I must tell you’ said Tripitaka to the master of the house ‘that we are six in all, including my white horse. I have another disciple who is bringing the luggage and with him is a lady who chanced to shelter under the same tree.’ The master of the house (who was called Mr. Ting) looked rather upset. ‘If you had come at any other time,’ he said, ‘I could well have entertained three guests or even five, but just now we have the river-people in our house.’—‘Who are the river-people?’ asked Tripitaka. ‘Reverend Sir,’ said Mr. Ting, ‘I will not deceive you. Several days ago a young man and woman came to my house carrying many rolls of silk. We asked them who they were and where they came from, but they could not say.’—‘Can a man forget even his own name?’ said Tripitaka. ‘Old Sir,’ said Mr. Ting, ‘when I told you they cannot say, I meant they cannot speak. For although in other ways they are like men, in this way they are like fish. When they answer us their lips move silently and we cannot understand.’—‘And is it because of this that you call them river-people?’ asked Tripitaka. ‘It is not only because of this,’ said Mr. Ting. ‘You must know that the silks they wear are like water, now dark, now bright, sometimes many coloured like the rainbow, sometimes all shadowy and grey. Moreover, a very old man of this place remembers hearing when he was a child that once in a while the river people, dressed in watery silks, come up from their house in the river to visit the world above. But it is only once in many years that they get leave to come. For they are subjects of the Dragon King and he likes to keep his people under his eye.’

‘And so they are lodging here in your house?’ asked Tripitaka. ‘Master,’ said Mr. Ting, ‘I had no choice but to receive them, for it has been handed down that it brings bad luck to turn them away. And if one is to have guests, I cannot say they are bad guests. For one thing, they put us to no expense, for in exchange for their watery silks, the people of this place give them fruit and rice; and for another, they make no noise. I do not know whether in their own country they are of high rank or low. But the proverb says, “Better be laughed at for honouring the humble than take the risk of humbling the great.” So I have put them in the guest chamber, and you, honoured Sirs, must sleep in the gallery.’

‘Have you put up the awning?’ asked Pigsy, who had just arrived. ‘Fool,’ said Monkey, ‘why should we put up an awning?’—‘For my

wedding,' said Pigsy. ' You can go to India and fetch your scriptures. I shall stay here and marry my bride.'—' Don't listen to his nonsense,' said Monkey to the lady, who was beginning to explain once more that she was being pursued by her master, the great merchant, and had not time to stay and be married. ' Do not listen to him. He has one wife already at Mr. Kao's farm and very likely others as well. As for your master, if he ill-treats you, why do you not go to the magistrate and ask for your release ? '—' Sir,' said the lady, ' the magistrate's salary is a thousand piculs a year, a great merchant's income is twenty-thousand piculs. Judge for yourself whether a merchant can buy up a magistrate, or a magistrate a merchant ? '—' Every jewel has its price,' said Monkey. ' How much did this merchant pay for you ? '—' Holy man,' said the lady, ' if he had only been buying a servant he might have paid 30,000 cash. But I was trained from my childhood to be a skilled musician and for me he paid 200,000 cash. But I have heard him say that he had sworn an oath to his parents to " Seek profit and not seek fame," and to his partners to " sell the false and never sell the true." I am sure that if I were put up to purchase he would sell another in my stead and ask a tenfold profit into the bargain.'—' That would mean two million cash wanted,' said Sandy.

They were still talking when there was a loud knock at the door. The lute-player, picking up her instrument, fled full tilt into the inner room, and instantly a man clad in robes more costly than those of the noblest prince or most powerful Minister, burst in, asking whether a runaway lute-player had taken shelter. ' We have given shelter to four priests who are fetching scriptures from the Western Land. No woman has come to us.'—' Sir,' said the man, ' I am a merchant and it is my trade to deceive, to sell brass as gold and rice grains as pearls. But you are an honest farmer and it grieves me that you should not speak the truth.' So saying he bent down and picked up from the floor a halcyon hairpin, that had fallen when the lady rose suddenly to her feet. ' This hairpin,' he said, ' is one that she often wore.' Mr. Ting looked very embarrassed. ' Wealthy Sir,' said Tripitaka, ' we will no longer deceive you. The lady for whom you are looking is indeed in the inner room. But do not forget that " reputation is the only treasure that outlasts the grave." The world would speak well of you if you did not carry off this hapless lady against her will.'

' Reverend Sir,' said the merchant, ' I have many singing-girls at home and would gladly let her go. But I am bound by an oath I made to my father and brother that till my dying day, I would always follow profit, not fame. Judge then whether Heaven and Earth would punish me or not punish me, if I were to give up a treasure that is worth a million cash.'—' I would gladly put in a word for you with

Heaven,' said Monkey, 'but as I was not there very long and left under not very agreeable circumstances I might make matters worse. I was down in the Earth for five hundred years, but did not get about much and never actually met the Earth-Emperor.'

'The rain has stopped,' said the merchant, 'and the night is warm. I shall sit outside the front door and keep watch till my horse has been fed and groomed. My servant is already at the back door to guard the inner rooms. In this way, there is no danger that my treasure will slip out and my great vow be broken.'—'The law is on his side,' said Mr. Ting, when the merchant had left the room, 'and an oath is a solemn thing. But right is on our side, for it is right to be merciful. What is to be done?'—'The merchant,' said Tripitaka, 'is a man of strict principle. He has kept his great oath for maybe thirty years and will certainly not fail in keeping strict watch for the time it takes to feed and groom a horse. If the servant were a man of such steadfast purpose, he would not have remained a servant. Our only chance lies with him.'—'I will go and have a look,' said Monkey. Dear Monkey! He went out into the courtyard and somersaulting over the house he hovered in the air of dawn high over the back door. Peering down with his steely eyes, he saw that the merchant's servant was at one moment rubbing down the horse and the next peeping in at the back door to make sure that the lady was still in the room, and then running back to the horse. And Monkey heard him grumble, saying, 'To keep watch on one room is easy and to groom one horse is easy, but to do both at the same time is not an easy thing.'—'The Master was right,' said Monkey to himself, 'our best chance lies here. The proverb says, "An angry man can always be outwitted." ' Monkey alighted gently a little way off and came up to the servant. 'You are tiring yourself out,' he said, 'but there is a means by which you might save yourself half your trouble.'—'Holy Sir,' said the man, 'what means is that?'—'If you made this lady play on her lute,' said Monkey, 'you would be sure she was still there and would not have the trouble of keeping an eye upon her. Then you could quickly groom and feed your horse and have time to eat something yourself as well.'—'Reverend Sir,' said the man, 'please tell the lady to strike up a tune and Mr. Ting to send me a bowl of rice and a jug of wine. But do not let my master see; for he only told me to feed the horse and said nothing of my feeding myself.'

'Brothers,' said Monkey, when he returned, 'we can first take counsel slowly, but afterwards we must act quickly. Which of you can play the lute? And he told them of his conversation with the merchant's servant. I believe my wife can play a little,' said Mr. Ting, 'but she is staying with her parents and I myself cannot play at all.'—'I feel sure that my disciples are quite ignorant of worldly music,' said Tripitaka. 'What about these river-people?' said Monkey.

He went to the guest-room and opened the door. The moon was shining at the window. At first he could see no bed, but only what seemed to be a river with a path of moonlight upon it stretching across the room. Shading his eyes with his hand Monkey saw at last that what he had been looking at was the river-people lying in bed under a counterpane of watery silks. 'I suppose I must take the plunge,' laughed Monkey to himself, and going up to the bed he shook the river-man by the shoulder. They both started up and as they stood by the bed in their watery shifts it was as though a waterfall stretched from ceiling to floor. 'Do either of you play the lute?' Monkey asked. They seemed to understand his question, but in reply, they only moved their lips silently, like fishes in a bowl, and clenching their hands gently tapped their knuckles together, hers against his and his against hers.

Monkey was quick to read the language of signs and knew that by this they meant that their water music under the river was the chiming of pebble against pebble, not that of pipes or strings. 'Honoured pair,' said the Monkey, 'I am sorry that I troubled you. The music you tell me of will not help us at all. Go back to your watery dreams.'

But instead of going back to bed, the river-people began putting their silks together and tidying the room, like guests who are about to depart.

'Brothers,' said Monkey when he came back, 'we must think again. These water-people are good musicians, but it seems they can only play on the stone-chimes and have never learnt to play upon the lute.'—'Where is this lute?' asked Pigsy, who had been dozing and did not much know what had been going on. 'Fool,' said Monkey, 'have you no eyes in your head? The lady took it with her into the inner room.'—'As a matter of fact I can play the lute,' said Pigsy, to everyone's surprise. 'When you left us together under the trees, I took a lesson from my bride.'—'Disciple,' said Tripitaka, 'it is still my opinion that we who have left the World ought not even to listen to music, much less make music ourselves. But as the safety of a living creature is at stake perhaps there would be no harm in your playing a short piece in the Correct Mode. Afterwards, you can burn a little incense and say the Formula of Expiation, and then all may be well.'

They all stole into the back-room on tip-toe, Mr. Ting carrying a bowl of rice and a jug of wine which he set before the servant in the back-yard. Their plan was to smuggle out the lady through the vent in the kitchen roof, while Pigsy played his tune on the lute. But when he saw that his bride was being taken from him, Pigsy, who had only offered to play because he wanted to sit with the lady in the inner room, became very cross and unwilling. 'Play,

fool ! ' whispered Monkey, thrusting the lute into Pigsy's arms. ' I have forgotten how the tune begins,' said Pigsy sulkily. ' Then play the end first,' said Monkey. ' Brother,' said Pigsy, ' we artists are not like you men of practical affairs whose lives are tethered to clock and drum. Give me an hour or two and perhaps the inspiration will come.'—' Fool,' said Monkey, ' we have not a moment to lose. Play or I will smash you and your inspirations into a thousand pieces.' And so saying he brandished his iron cudgel in front of Pigsy's snout. ' All right, I'll play, I'll play,' muttered Pigsy, very much scared.

But to return to the merchant's servant. He had not tasted more than a mouthful of rice and drunk more than a drop of wine when he heard the most extraordinary noise coming from inside the room. It was sometimes as though set after set of copper knives were being thrown on to a tiled floor, sometimes there was a noise like a metal hand-bell falling storey after storey, down the steps of a high tower. Sometimes it was as though a cartload of mill-stones was being dropped on to a crystal dome, or again as though an elephant shod with lead were dragging an empty tin chest along a cobbled road. Yet the strange thing was that in all these noises there was something that faintly resembled the music of a lute. ' I'd better go and have a look,' thought the servant. But he was enjoying his meal and while he went on eating and drinking he said to himself, ' I have often been told that the people of today love new tunes and do not care for the old. No doubt this is the new music of which they talk,' and he went on with his supper.

But Monkey who was standing over Pigsy to see that he did not stop playing, while the others brought the lady to a ladder set up against the rafters of the kitchen roof, could soon contain himself no longer and not stopping to think whether what he did was good or bad, he snatched the lute out of Pigsy's hands crying, ' Fool, why did you tell us that you could play the lute ? You do not even know that it is played with a plectrum and try to play it with your hands.'—' Brother, I saw the thing you speak of, but I thought it was a back-scratcher,' said Pigsy. Monkey then played a tune that he had learnt from one of the fairy-maidens in the Peach Blossom Garden. Listen while he plays !

*The loud notes swelled and scattered like wind blowing through the rain ;
The soft notes died like the whisper of ghosts that tremble at dawn.
Now the tinkling of thin ice dropped in a silver jar,
Now a quivering silence broken by the clash of many swords.*

' If what came before was music, then this is not,' the man thought as he listened. ' And if this is music, as I certainly believe it to be, then what came before was not music at all.' And so saying he threw down his rice-bowl, leapt into the room, saw at a glance that the lady

was not there and without even a look at Monkey, who was sitting cross-legged with the lute on his knees, or at Pigsy, who was beating time to the fairy music with his muck-rake, the servant rushed to the kitchen, where he heard a sound of hasty whispering and scuffling. He found Sandy and Mr. Ting half-way up the ladder trying to squeeze the lady through the vent in the roof while Tripitaka sat at the foot of the ladder giving them advice. 'You pack of rascals!' the man shouted. 'Where is that monkey-faced priest who told me the lady would play to me while I ate my supper?'—'Here he is,' cried Monkey, who had now joined them. 'The lady had another engagement and sent me as her deputy. You've had your music and your supper. I don't see what you have got to complain of.'—'Disciple,' said Tripitaka, 'it is easier to mend a bow-string with a dab of glue than to save a foiled plan by empty talk. It is not Heaven's will that this lady should escape. She had better come down.'

Weeping bitterly and smudged with soot the lady came down the ladder. 'Master,' said Pigsy, 'I am a plain man and do not know much about Heaven's Will or about music either. But this I do know, that so long as *I* played all was well, but when my Brother played, everything went wrong. Judge then which is the better player.'—'Monkey,' said Tripitaka, 'you should not have interrupted your Second Brother.'—'Quite right,' broke in Pigsy. 'There are only four of us; we are badly understaffed and when there is a rush we can't carry on unless everyone lends a hand at whatever turns up. I manage the luggage pretty well, but I can't be expected to have everyone else's job at my fingers' ends, and you ought to be grateful to me for helping when I can.'

It was now quite light and the merchant decided it was time to make a start. Coming into the house he was a little surprised to find the lady so bedraggled. But it was not his way to ask unnecessary questions; he merely said to his servant, 'I will keep my eye on my treasure while you go and bring round the horse.'—'Wealthy patron,' said Tripitaka, with tears in his eyes, 'do you know that those who show no pity in this life are born again as tigers in the next?'—'I would rather be born as a tiger than as a mouse,' said the merchant. 'Is there nothing,' asked Tripitaka with a sigh, 'that would turn you from your purpose and persuade you to set this lady free?'—'Reverend Sir,' said the merchant, 'I will not deceive you. If anyone were to offer me more than I gave for her, I could not refuse, for I am bound by my Great Vow. For three hundred thousand cash she is yours.' Monkey felt in the pocket of his little jacket and brought out a few copper coins that he kept there for luck. Sandy went up to him and began counting them. 'It's not enough,' he said when he had counted several times. At this moment they became aware

that the river-people were standing motionless in the corner of the room, ready to set out upon their journey. Presently having engaged their attention, the river man made a strange circular gesture with his hands. 'He is saying they want us to take them on as porters,' said Pigsy. 'They are not very strongly built, but I daresay between them they might manage to carry the luggage.'—'Fool,' said Monkey, 'he is saying nothing of the kind. The shape he drew with his hands is that of a jar.'—'I can't imagine why he wants a jar,' said Mr. Ting, 'but he is welcome to this,' and he handed the river-man a small earthenware jug. The river-man shook his head and after pressing his hands over the jug stretched out his arms and drew in the air, the shape of a much larger vessel. 'He'd better have the rain-tub,' said Mr. Ting. The river-man passed one hand over the other. 'He says you must tilt it up and empty it first,' said Monkey. 'Pigsy,' said Tripitaka, 'go and help Mr. Ting to empty the rain-tub.'—'I should have thought they had water enough where they come from,' grumbled Pigsy, 'without wanting water-tubs to collect it in.' But he trundled off and presently came back, rolling in the empty tub. The river-people signified that it was just what they needed. Then both at once they began to shed tears of parting. They stood by the water-tub and their shining tears fell like grain into a barn. The merchant hurried forward, bared his arm and thrust his hand into the tub. He brought out a handful of pearls; and it could not have been otherwise, for as they fall the tears of river-people turn into pearls.

Pausing for a while from their grief they made a questioning sign towards Mr. Ting. 'They are asking,' said Monkey, 'whether they would be inconveniencing Mr. Ting if they paid for their lodging with pearls. They are very short of cash.'—'They have given so little trouble,' said Mr. Ting, 'that I had not thought of making any charge. But as they have kindly wept so copiously, perhaps there are pearls enough in the tub to buy this lady's freedom. I would gladly use them for that purpose.' The merchant took a foot-rule from his belt and after measuring the diameter of the tub and the height to which the pearls had filled it, he turned to Mr. Ting and said, 'By relinquishing this lady and taking the pearls I should certainly be making a profit. I am bound by my vow just as these holy gentlemen are bound by theirs. In such a matter my personal inclinations are of no account. I cannot choose but accept.' So the pearls were emptied into the merchant's saddle pack, the lady (washed and dusted) was sent back to her parents and the river people wandered back through the fields to their watery home.

And if you do not know whether Tripitaka and his disciples stayed at the farm for ever, or went to seek scriptures in India, you must listen to what is told to you in the next chapter.

St. Sergius and St. Simeon

BY ROBIN FEDDEN

I. RESAFA

The road that leads down the Euphrates from beyond Aleppo was for a thousand years the frontier of the West. In these empty spaces the Great cast long shadows : Xenophon and the Ten Thousand ; Crassus, whose eagles turned back so ominously from the ford at Thapsacus ; the apostate emperor going to his death ; Trajan battering through to Ctesiphon ; Belisarius with his knack of victory. The river dominates the scene. Its lugubrious brown waters move very fast. The Euphrates swirls through the wastes. Islands covered with thickets of tamarisk, and innumerable mud-shoals like giant crocodiles, split and parcel the hurrying water. Often the river is divided into two or three streams, and it forms lagoons where the annual spring floods have spilt over its proper banks. These lagoons, in which the clouded water has time to settle, are surprisingly and completely blue —the river itself is uniformly thick and muddied—and are the resort of innumerable birds, among them the white-winged Black Tern, who, in defiance of proverbial wisdom, prefers to fish in clear waters. Cultivation follows the river, and varies in width from a precarious pasture, snatched out of the desert, to wide bays of corn, enclosed between the sands and the Euphrates. Villages are rare and the inhabitants few ; the Beduin live in tents, and the semi-nomads build with reeds like birds, their huts barely distinguishable in fields of sedge. They catch fish, stalk the lumbering geese, raise a little water to irrigate their fields, and pasture their sheep along the river-banks. They remain pathetically abject. A strip of green among rocks and sand is their whole life and livelihood, while the wealth of the river hurries away southward.

To pitch camp by this road and these waters is to perform a gesture that has been repeated again and again through history. The wind which often blows downstream drops at sunset, and is succeeded by a comprehensive hush. Even the tall feathery reeds cease to scrape and sway. As the far bank fades, the river assumes Amazonian proportions. Moment by moment the traveller and his chattels grow more incidental and insignificant ; his fire in the gathering darkness flickers by permission, a mere candle. Under his mosquito net, he will hear duck calling on the water—the disembodied and disturbing night conversation of birds—and may recall Pascal's words : ‘*Les fleuves de Babylon coulent, et tombent, et entraînent. . . O Sainte Sion, où tout est stable, où rien ne tombe.*’ All night the river swirls past his feet.

West of the Euphrates, the desert, mile after mile, forms an abrupt escarpment. Below are the riverine Arabs, deceitful and sharp, the river life, the turned soil. Above is the world of the desert steppe, the crisp dry air, the little aromatic shrubs and plants, herds of drifting gazelle, and distances carrying away the eye. In the solitude of this desert steppe, some fifty kilometres from the Euphrates, stand the ruins of Resafa, one of the most extraordinary monuments to the civilisation of Byzantium. There is no road to Resafa, but you can drive easily enough across the undulating desert plateau, and the ancient town, standing within its rectangular walls, is visible for miles. Built of a peculiar light gypsum it shines, almost glitters, in the sun as if it were a town of mica or glass. Though deserted for centuries it appears, from a distance, a complete place, unspoilt and unbroken ; the silence as you drive up to the walls comes as a shock. Here was once a whole city, where now only hawks wheel and adders bask among the stones. At most, there may be three or four of the black tents of the 'Anaza' tribe, pitched outside the walls. The Beduin come for water and find little enough. There is a single well which far below ground yields a meagre brackish supply. With this for a few days they refresh themselves and their flocks, and then move on.

Resafa first enters history in the Assyrian period ; and the Assyrians probably turned it into a military camp in the ninth century B.C. Its position, as time went on, gave it local importance : first, it lay on the caravan route from Damascus, north via Palmyra, to the ford of the Euphrates at Thapsacus ; second, the narrowness of the Euphrates valley due east of Resafa made it difficult for caravans to go that way in time of flood and they accordingly climbed on to the desert plateau and turned inland to the town. Two caravan routes thus converged. But any important development was hindered by lack of water ; and the rôle of Resafa would probably always have been modest, but for the chance that led a saint and martyr to his death there early in the fourth century.

Somewhere about A.D. 305, a certain Sergius, commander of the Imperial Palace guard, convicted as a Christian, reached Resafa in the most pitiable state. He had been driven by his guards on foot from the Euphrates in shoes lined with sharp nails. On arrival, he was condemned to death and decapitated, having had his lips bored through to receive the rope by which he was led out to execution. The death of Sergius, or St. Sergius as he soon became, made a deep impression. His fame spread rapidly and, with the end of Roman persecution, a cult arose at the place of his martyrdom and burial. Resafa in his honour changed its name to Sergiopolis, and therewith embarked on fame and a period of immense prosperity as the centre of his pilgrimage. Though faith might create a town such as Resafa became, its maintenance without proper water supplies demanded the

exact organisation that only a highly developed material civilisation could supply. Byzantium stepped in to supplement Christian fervour.

Sergius had died outside the north gate, and there fifteen bishops set up a first church over his grave. This was followed in the early fifth century by the building of a great basilica and monastery inside the walls in the south-east corner of the town. Three hundred pounds weight of gold were spent on the basilica alone, which in due course became a cathedral and finally by A.D. 550 the seat of a metropolitan with four bishops under him.

As a centre of faith and superstition the power and repute of Sergiopolis increased out of all recognition, and St. Sergius himself acquired that local pre-eminence which in due course was to make him the patron saint of Syria.¹ The Emperor Anastasius thought it worth while to remove the Martyr's tomb to Constantinople; the Arabs of Palmyrena, with a pretty disregard for the ethical implications of their activity, carried ikons of the Saint on their freebooting raids; and the rich showered their gifts on his shrine. This wealth and fame brought its inevitable and unenviable reward. Khosroes I, in 540, sent word from the Euphrates to the Bishop of Sergiopolis that he was willy-nilly to ransom twelve thousand captives taken by the Persians at Sura for two hundred pounds of gold. Candidius the Bishop, unable to raise the money, was left with no alternative but to offer a promissory note and pledge the treasures of the Saint and his own reputation as security. Of the twelve thousand captives which he was supposed to receive in return, the majority did not survive their treatment at the hands of their illustrious captor, and the bishop at the end of two years found himself quite unable to meet his obligations. Khosroes, not content, in lieu of payment, with the treasures of Sergiopolis—including a magnificent cross presented to the shrine by Justinian and Theodora—decided to seize the town. Treachery having failed, the king, 'boiling with anger' as Procopius phrases it, sent a force of six thousand to take the city by assault or siege. The place, though at the time sadly undergarrisoned, effectively repulsed initial attacks. Its resistance was primarily due to the fortified walls which Justinian had perhaps just restored. A siege, however, had disheartened the defenders to the point of capitulation, when it was learnt that the Persians had only two days' water supply remaining. The city held out and the Persian forces were compelled to withdraw. Half a century later, Khosroes II treated the city very differently. He showed a proper respect for the saint and dutifully returned the famous cross extorted by Khosroes I. Later, when his Christian wife

¹ St. George, martyred in the reign of Diocletian, holds second place in Syrian favour. Oddly enough the Syrian doctors, Cosmas and Damian, whose joint martyrdom the Italian Renaissance painters were so fond of portraying, are less esteemed in their own country than in Europe.

conceived a son, it was said by the express intervention of the Saint, he sent further presents to swell the metropolitan's treasury.

The Arab conquest brought an end to the great days of Resafa. Though the enlightened Caliph Al-Hisham might establish his residence there, decay was ultimately inevitable. Only the careful organisation of Byzantium had maintained a thriving town in this waterless place ; and, when Byzantium failed, drought was bound sooner or later to prevail. By the ninth century the town had altogether changed. There were only a few shops and most of the inhabitants had reverted to pastoral occupations. Even so Justinian's walls continued in good repair, and two hundred years later a wandering traveller found the town as effectively fortified as the Caliph's palace at Baghdad. Enough vitality also remained in the town to effect the restoration of the great Basilica in 1093, which the mediaeval geographer Yaqût considered, even in this time, one of the wonders of the world. Resafa, however, had no future ; in the twelfth century we learn that there were left no cattle, grain, comforts or commerce.

The few inhabitants lived, as they had done before fame and wealth came to the place, by 'touting' caravans and chaffering with the Beduin. That they apparently still remained Christian is a touching tribute to the agonies of their saint a thousand years earlier. To this finished history the Mongol invasions provided only a postscript. When Hulagu's hordes broke into the town in 1247 it was already dead ; since then it has remained empty for over five centuries.

This very desertion has preserved it. Though the great ditch which, in typical Byzantine fashion, ringed the town, has long ago been filled with sand, the walls with their square flanking towers stand almost entire and enclose a rectangular area of between thirty and forty acres that was once packed with buildings. The scheme of the place is interesting, since it is typical of those planned Greek towns which the Seleucids first founded throughout Syria and which, favoured by the Romans, continued to be built until Muslim times. Laid out with geometric regularity, and in a spirit most unoriental, the town was divided by two large intersecting avenues. The four quarters so created were again neatly divided by smaller parallel intersecting streets. At the termini of the four avenues stood the main gates of the town, facing the four points of the compass. The central avenue that ran from the north to the south gate was apparently, according to custom, arcaded. In such towns all was, in principle, planned and orderly, though it is true that at Sergiopolis the exigencies of faith, in the form of churches, rather cut up the symmetry, and the late date of the buildings—they were mainly put up in the fifth or sixth centuries—meant that the classic sense of proportion had to compromise with vital religious interests.

The little church on the north side of the town, *extra muros*, probably marks the site of St. Sergius's martyrdom. If so, it was presumably there that the fifteen bishops, at some early date, raised his first tomb-church. The present building, as is shown by an inscription over the apsidal windows, dates from the time of the ruler Al-Mundir who flourished in the second half of the sixth century. He was one of those semi-independent Ghassanid princes who did such good work for the Byzantines in guarding Palmyrena and their desert provinces from the incursions of the tribes east and south. Though in detail the church is mediocre, except for the capitals with their rustic acanthus design, it is well preserved and gives a pleasing impression of solidity and proportion. Architecturally it is, in a sense, something of a rarity for it belongs to the non-basilican type of church, characterised by a central dome, which was unusual in Northern Syria.

In the town itself there are three important things to see, the North Gate, the Martyry, and the Basilica of Saint Sergius. All probably date mainly from the late fifth or early sixth century, but the last differs very much in style from the other two. In the North Gate and the Martyry, the decoration is very fine and exceedingly rich and shows classical decorative influence far more strongly than the Basilica. Its sophistication speaks of the art of a capital. The decoration of the Basilica on the other hand might be termed provincial work, and is said to have close affinities with the frontier art of Christianity across the Euphrates and in Mesopotamia.

The North Gateway, with its frieze of grapes and vine leaves and its acanthus capitals, is certainly one of the finest Byzantine remains in Syria. An interesting point is that such triple gateways elsewhere have two lateral gates for pedestrians and a central gate for wheeled vehicles, but at Sergiopolis the central gate was made hardly larger than the others since nothing more formidable than camel traffic was ever likely to enter this desert town. The decoration of the Martyry, where it has been preserved, is fine. The plan of the church, unfortunately very ruined, is also remarkable, for it seems to represent a transition between the long basilican type of church and the domed circular church associated with Byzantium. A rectangular nave terminates conservatively enough in an apse, but the sides of the nave itself swell out at a certain point into semi-circular bays which recall the 'central' domed type of building. It was to the Martyry that the Saint's body was transported from the original church *extra muros*, and there that it probably rested until its removal.

The Basilica in the south-east corner of the town is far better preserved than the Martyry and is a large church. It consists of a narthex, two side aisles, and a nave terminating in a semi-circular apse, whose vault takes the shape of a conch shell—a pleasing motif common throughout the classical and Byzantine remains in Syria.

Christians tradition attributed the church to Constantine and spoke of the mosaics with which he had adorned it, but the Basilica as it stands today mainly dates from about the beginning of the sixth century. Though it received considerable, and none too fortunate, additions in the eleventh-century restoration, and though the detail is unimpressive, this hardly detracts from the general effect. It is a great ruin. The nave and aisles, moreover, are not empty. The needs of the birds have converted the church shell into a huge aviary, since it provides the only spacious shade in the dead town. Birds sit and watch the stranger from the clerestory and the capitals; there is an intermittent coming and going, a weaving and swerving between the arches, a fluttering out of sunlight into shade. The aviary is particularly patronised by Rollers with their blue-green plumage and weird metallic voices, by numberless wild pigeons, and by hawks which somehow manage to live on terms with the other birds.

Outside, in the blinding sunlight, the walled town is little but a maze of grass-grown mounds and fragmentary ruins. The alignment of most of the streets has long since disappeared and it is by no means easy even to make one's way about. It is all silent and deserted. In Palmyrene Syria, the traveller soon discovers that the desertion and silence of its ruins are incalculably greater than the merely natural emptiness of the deserts which surround them. The desolation of ancient sites is suffocating.

By contrast to the ruin of the town, the huge subterranean reservoirs, with their fine brick-vaulted roofs, remain quite intact. Though all the masonry above ground—the conduits and the aqueduct which brought in the water across the walls—has long ago disappeared, these impressive cisterns still look as though they would hold the town's supply for siege or drought as effectively as in the sixth century. It is appropriate that this should be so, for upon their proper functioning depended the very existence of Sergiopolis. They serve to emphasise that remarkable Byzantine organisation which alone enabled faith to build and maintain the town. North-west, beyond Aleppo, where one deserted Christian site of the Byzantine period succeeds another, and the waterless hills are full of ruined bishops' palaces, and inns, and aqueducts, the same thought comes home again: how admirable in spite of failing resources, of the Persians, and of the wearying quarrels of ecclesiastics, was the organisation of the Byzantine world.

II. KALAT SEMAN

Of the ruins near Aleppo, testifying to the Christian civilisation which flourished in North Syria from the fourth century until the invasion of the Arabs in the seventh, Kalat Seman, or the Castle of Simeon, is by far the most important and impressive. Like Resafa it was populated by faith, but the fortunes and progress of its founder-

saint were even more extraordinary than those of the martyr St. Sergius. Simeon Stylites early showed a talent and aptitude for maceration and asceticism. At the age of sixteen, he retired to a monastery. Not content with wearing a spiked girdle that drew blood, he further disciplined himself by digging a trench in the monastery garden in which he buried himself up to the chin for several months. His next austerity was to wall himself up during Lent. That his fellow-monks had not yet taken his true measure seems evident from the fact that they put themselves to the trouble of passing in six loaves to him. They were found uneaten when he emerged from his fast. It was apparently in A.D. 423, to escape the crowds which his sanctity had already begun to attract, that he first took up his station at Kalat Seman upon a modest pillar some ten feet high. From this, he in due course graduated to a great sixty-foot column on the top of which he remained for thirty years. The column was composed of three drums to symbolise the Trinity, and its top was encircled by a brief parapet, presumably to stop the Saint falling off. Such a danger was further averted by the chain and iron collar which encircled his neck.

In this elevated station, where his private necessities and religious exercises were equally public, Simeon passed his time in prayer and fasting. An exact spectator who attempted to tell the number of the Saint's daily prostrations, having reached one thousand two hundred and forty-four, lost count. He received the eucharist once a week from a brother monk who brought it up on a ladder, and he twice daily preached to the crowds who assembled to hear him. Thus, through the bitter cold of North Syrian winters and the broiling summer heats, he lived on from year to year, a miracle of endurance and the cynosure of an Empire. When the progress of an ulcered foot threatened his life, the Emperor Theodosius sent a personal letter and a deputation of bishops, begging him to descend to earth and receive treatment. The Saint, however, had his own nostrums and a forty days' fast restored him to health. When writing in polite refusal of the Emperor's request, he added some pointed advice on Imperial administration; and indeed, as his reputation grew, he became generous with counsel and admonition to churchmen and emperors, emerging as a powerful champion of orthodoxy. It was through his direct intervention that a humane edict restoring their synagogues to the unfortunate Jews was cancelled. By the middle of the century his fame was immense, and the number of miracles that he was reported to have performed enormous. The roads that led to the beautiful corner of the foothills where his pillar stood were crowded with pilgrims, and a sea of curious and devout faces daily gazed up at the extraordinary hermit. People came even from Britain to see and consult him. In July 459 when news got about that the Saint was dying, a vast concourse from all parts gathered on the hills to hear his

last words, and his body was later transported in great pomp by the Patriarch to Antioch and buried in a church specially built for the purpose. His monk's hood, a relic of consequence, went to the Emperor Leo at Constantinople.

There is no doubt about the truth of the main outlines of the Simeon story, since his historian, Theodoret of Tyr, was his contemporary and friend. Though commonly regarded as the first Stylite, Saint Simeon's practice seems to have been anticipated in a mild form by the pagans, and the Saint's column had its prototype in the pillars associated with heathen temples. Thus, there had been a column at the temple of Atargatis at Hierapolis, north-east of Aleppo, which was ascended once yearly. A priest remained on top of the column for seven days offering up prayers for the well-being of the district, and for such suppliants as brought offerings and demanded his intercession. Saint Simeon's example, however, gave the stylite idea tremendous publicity in the Christian world. The results of his elevation were immediate, and ascetics upon their pillars were soon to be found dotted all over northern Syria and further afield. Children were not spared the infection, and Simeon Stylites the Younger mounted his first pillar at so early an age that, as Evagrius says, 'he even cast his teeth in that situation.' Four miles outside Constantinople the Elder Simeon's disciple, Daniel Stylites, was a sight for twenty years, and from his pillar wielded considerable power, while at Beyrouth a stylite exhorted and influenced the University students. An ascetic tried to mount a pillar in Gaul; but the movement was not sympathetic to western tastes, and his bishop brought him down again and demolished his monument. The attractions of a position which demanded such ascetic discipline, and at the same time made sanctity inevitably apparent, continued to operate in the East for a long time and Saint Simeon's successors lasted in Syria until the eleventh century and in Georgia apparently even until the early nineteenth.

The road west from Aleppo to Kalat Seman crosses at first a rolling plain with outcrops of rock; though in detail insignificant, the landscape as a whole is most effective. The hills to the west lapse into washes of blue against which in summer the *durra* corn provides a foreground of deep, almost submarine, green. The earth, which east of Aleppo is a bitter greyish, here turns a brilliant red, like beef, and in some places is almost purple black. From time to time one passes the characteristic villages of the Aleppo district, built often on 'tells,' with their tidy clusters of conical bee-hive huts. Some forty kilometres out the road for a time runs beside its Roman predecessor (still in an admirable state of preservation), and then turns off into the hills for St. Simeon. The character of the country now changes. There are stones everywhere, and the peasants till only a few cleared patches of red earth, and cultivate a few small olive trees and fewer

vines. Permanent poverty ; but the traveller can afford to see only the sunshine, the showers of goldfinches over the rocks, and the continually changing views as the road works itself up among the hills.

It is in such austere country, on a bare rocky spur, that Kalat Seman is situated. A steep climb takes you up from the road to the ruins. In the sacred precincts small black cattle graze, and apricot- and fig-trees grow among blocks of fallen stone and fragments of acanthus carving. Across the rough turf, where once was a vast courtyard, you approach the basilica. The proportions and lavish decoration of the south, and main, entrance are splendid, but the size and beauty of the whole church do not at once come home. Only inside, when you have made your way to the centre of the church, is its magnificence apparent. You are, as a matter of fact, in the largest remaining Christian monument that dates from before the tenth- and eleventh-century cathedrals of the West, and perhaps in the finest building put up between the Roman monuments of the second century and the creation of Santa Sophia in the sixth.¹

The design of the building is unique, and was dictated by the wish to incorporate the Saint's pillar as the central point of interest. Where you had thought to find one basilica, there are actually four, arranged in the shape of a cross and facing roughly to the four points of the compass. At the centre of the cross is an open octagon where rose the sixty-foot pillar, whose base is still to be seen. The detail is as fine as the proportions : monolithic pillars, magnificent Corinthian capitals (some of them with that treatment of acanthus which gives a 'wind-blown' effect, and is said to have originated in these Syrian churches), and scrolls and bands of carved decoration of such beauty that the traveller comes to search hungrily for a mere foot or two where it lies scattered among the innumerable Christian ruins of these hills. Only the eastern basilica with its triple apse, whose luxuriant decorations are so well preserved, was strictly speaking used as a church. It was separated from the other three, which served simply as *promenoirs* for the crowds which flocked to see the sacred pillar. Though rustics even brought in their cattle to enjoy the benign influence of the place, women were excluded and might only catch a glimpse through the doorways, a rule which would evidently have met with the Saint's approval, since, with a proper ascetic phobia, he had in his lifetime allowed no women, not even his mother, to approach within the circle of stones which surrounded the base of his pillar. For the traveller, solitary among the ruins, it is curious to think of the rapt crowds, shoulder to shoulder, making the circuit of this extraordinary relic, and of all the life and devotion which once built and filled the place and which have now utterly ebbed away.

¹ St. Simeon's basilica covers an area considerably greater than Wells or Lichfield cathedrals.

By A.D. 560 when the historian Evagrius visited the church (less than a century after Simeon's death), miracles were already 'well authenticated' and he himself repeatedly saw a large and brilliant star shooting along the balustrade to the left of the Saint's pillar. Others more fortunate even saw 'a resemblance of the Saint's face flitting about here and there, with a long beard and wearing a tiara.'

Though the church of Saint Simeon is in its general lay-out unique, the east basilica, or church proper, presents close affinities to many other churches in Northern Syria, and among them to the Basilica of Saint Sergius at Resafa. It therefore provides a convenient starting point for a brief inquiry into the characteristics of the Christian architecture which sprang up all over these hills from the fourth to the seventh centuries A.D. The Syrians, wishing to build themselves places of Christian worship, might well have developed something on the lines of the temple *cella* with which they were familiar, had not such buildings been too small to house the communal services which the new rite involved. An alternative presented itself in the Roman basilica or hall of justice, and it was from this prototype that their churches evolved. The evolution was determined by two main factors: native Syrian originality and the needs of Christian worship. Starting in the fourth century from a Hellenistic model, the Syrians went on to produce an indigenous architecture which progressively moved away from its classic original. The country provided them with quantities of good limestone and the architects therefore had no occasion to use brick.¹ Their buildings are of stone, and of stone in such large blocks and so well fitted that no material was needed to bind it. Among the scores of Byzantine cities which dot the North Syrian hills there is hardly a scrap of mortar to be found. Though the buildings have weathered to a sombre grey, and have lost something of their finish, it is well to remember that they first went up a dazzling white.

The general type of basilica these architects developed differs very little throughout northern Syria. It is characterised by a long central nave, separated from two side aisles by rows of columns (or sometimes piers). These columns carry round arches, often of considerable span, which rest directly on the capitals of the columns without the interposition of an abacus. The columns themselves are always monolithic, and the capitals show every variety of adaptation from the classic orders, though Corinthian types largely predominate. Immediately above the arches of the nave is a clerestory. Windows, both in the clerestory and the side walls of the churches, are either rectangular or round-headed, though in the latter case they are seldom truly arched

¹ Eastward at Resafa gypsum takes the place of limestone. There exist only two brick churches in Syria—Kaṣr Ibn Wardan and Anderin—both built by the Emperor Justinian.

and simply have the lintel above the window-opening cut in semi-circular shape. The roofs were pent and always made of wood. They have inevitably disappeared, and the churches now stand in their scores open to the sky.

The east end of such churches was provided with an apsidal sanctuary, covered by a half-dome. From the exterior of the church, this apse was usually invisible, being concealed in a deep wall. It was flanked by two chambers, nearly always rectangular (the triple apses at St. Simeon and the Martyr at Resafa are most exceptional) the one used as a sacristy, and the other for the oblation before the litany. A woodwork screen separated the sanctuary from the nave, and another, somewhere in the body of the church, separated the male and female congregations. Woodwork screens, fitted into the windows, filtered the Syrian sunlight. None of these wooden accessories have survived. For decoration the basilicas relied primarily on carved stone. As an indigenous style developed, stone decoration became wonderfully lavish and various. The comparatively sparing decoration of the fourth-century basilicas gave place in the next two hundred years to long bands of intricate stone carving, flowing on from one window to another, to fluted columns, and finally to complicated fronts adorned with cornices. It is significant, however, that, as ornament increased, the sense of construction did not weaken. The builders, though they became artists, remained masons.

The North Syrians rarely put up the type of church with a central dome, which, later, was so characteristic of Byzance. Such a church exists outside the walls of Resafa, and the so-called baptistery at Kalat Seman provides another example.¹ That these are exceptions is significant, and it illustrates the very different approaches to architecture that prevailed at Byzantium and Antioch. The first relied upon the dome and built largely in brick, covering the substructure with a marvellous veneer of mosaic and marble. The School of Antioch avoided the dome; it envisaged a church as a basilica in stone, relying on this same stone, when carved, for its decoration.² The comparative freedom of this North Syrian architecture from Byzantine influences is only less interesting than its manifold connections with the Romanesque architecture of the West. Romanesque architecture appears to take over where these Syrian churches end, and that they did exert some actual influence on the West seems probable. The reliance on stone and stone carving provides an obvious technical similarity; but at Kalat Seman there are two things which seem to foreshadow the development of Western architecture in even more

¹ Only in southern Syria, in the Jebel Druze, did a general shortage of timber for roofing lead to the frequent erection of domed churches.

² Traces of mosaic are relatively rare in the churches of North Syria, and the basketwork capital, so typically Byzantine, does not appear at all.



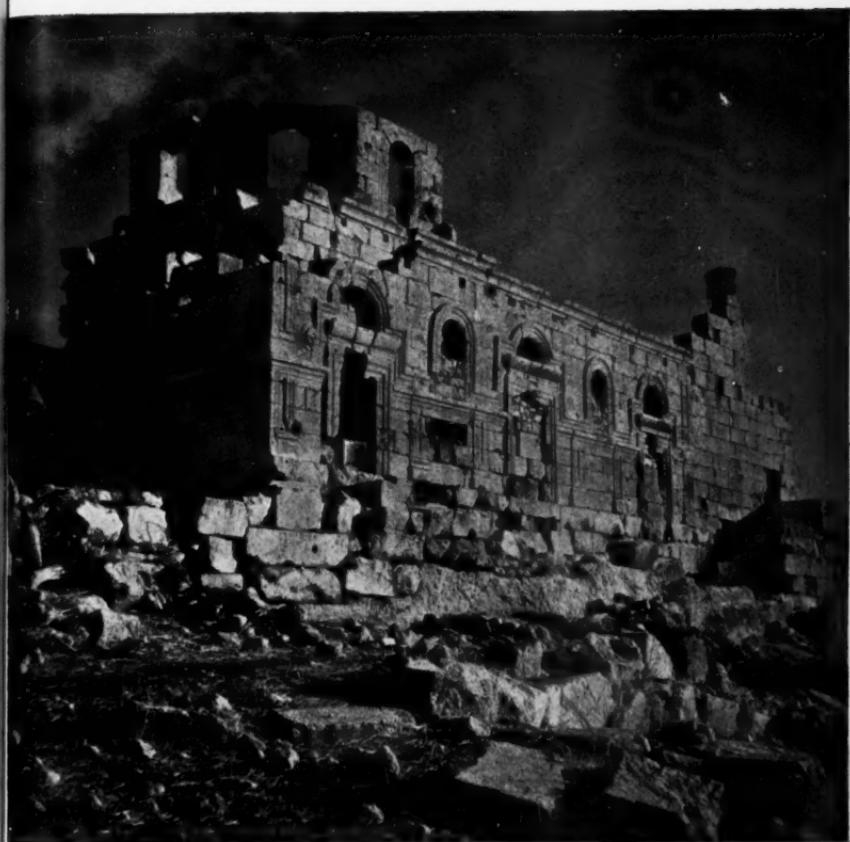
RESAFA : A CORNER OF THE TOWN SHOWING THE GREAT BASILICA

(The curious pock-marks have been made by Beduin, century after century, digging for treasure.)

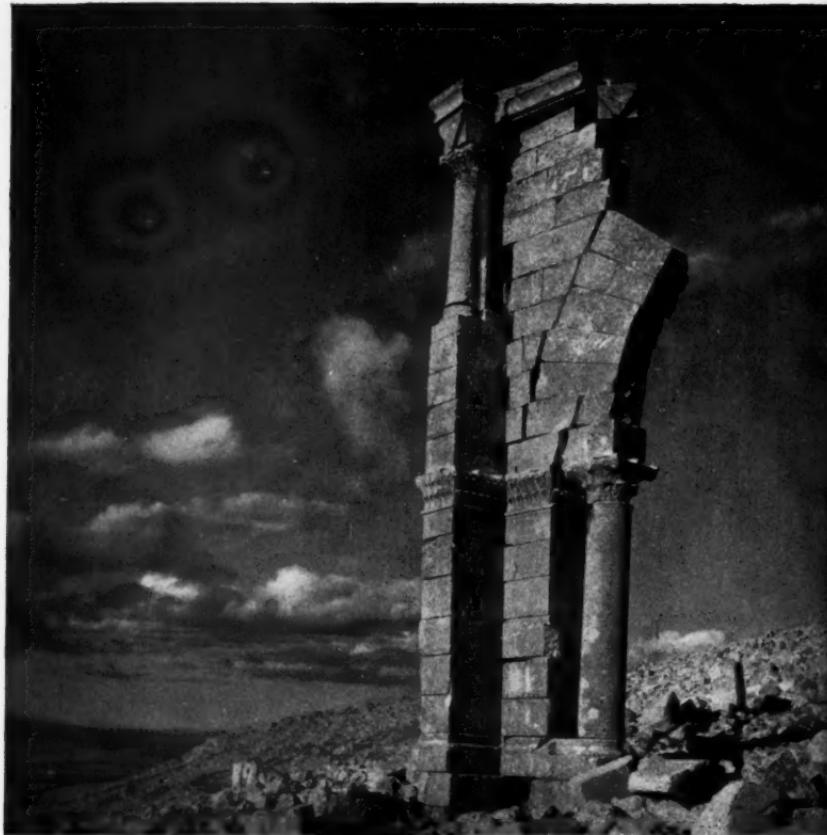


INSIDE THE WALLS OF RESAFA

RESAFA : DETAIL OF THE NORTH GATE

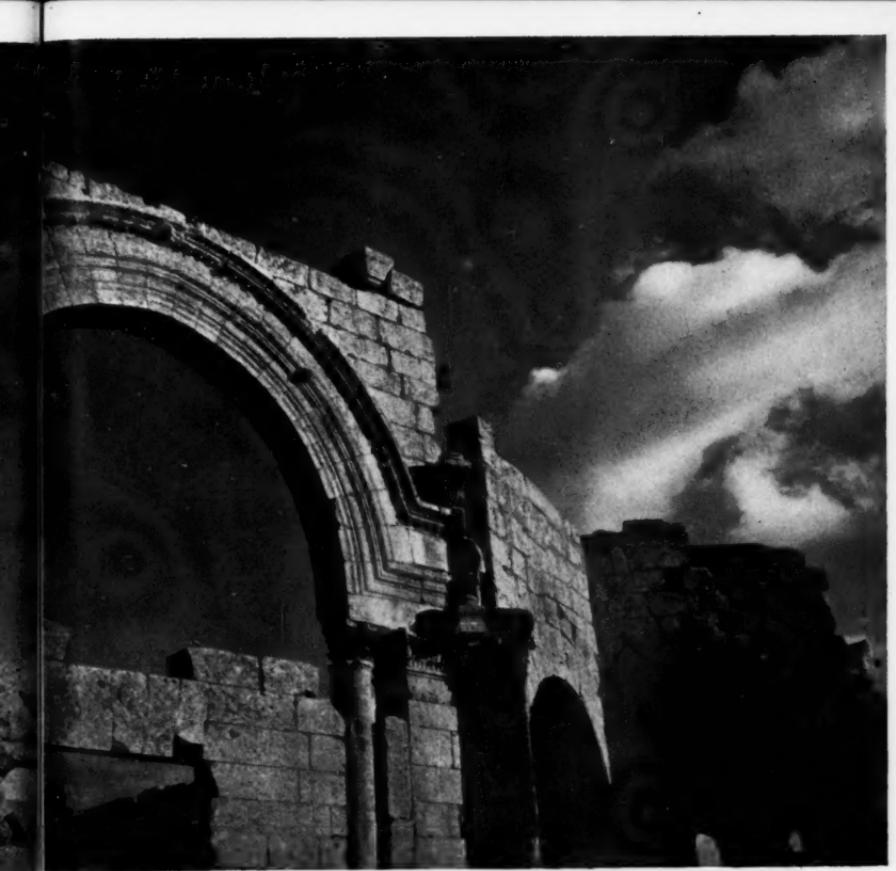


THE SO-CALLED BAPTISTRY AT KALAT SEMAN

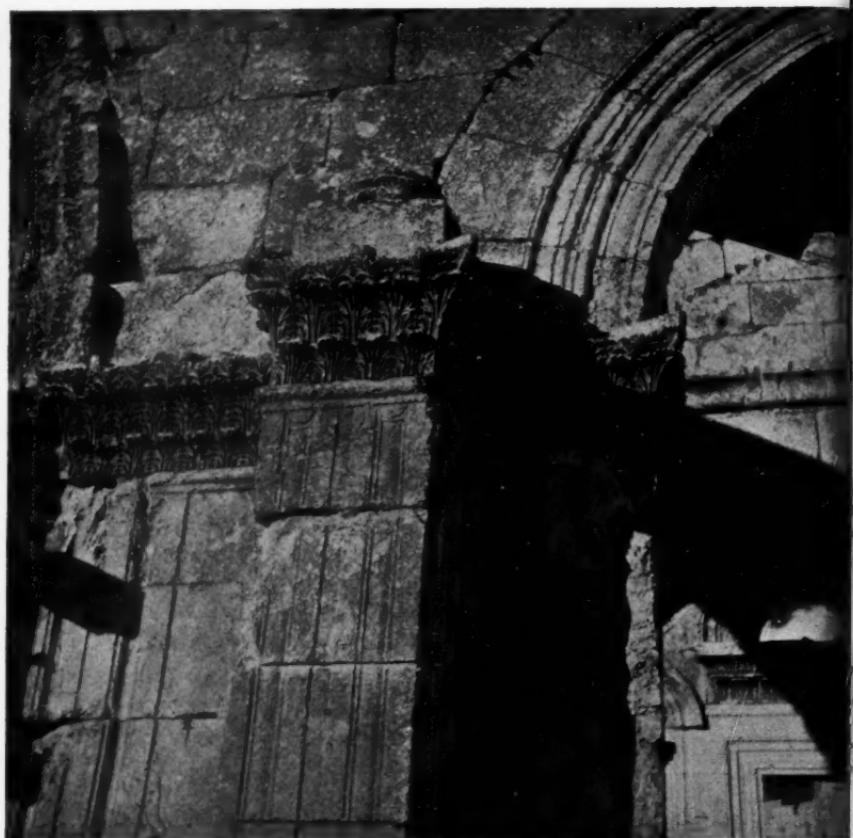


TRIUMPHAL ARCH ON THE SACRED WAY UP TO THE BASILICA OF ST. SIMEON

LALAT S



KALAT SEMAN



KALAT SEMAN—DETAIL OF ACANTHUS CARVING

striking fashion. They are the exterior of the apse of the East Basilica, with its two rows of superposed columns, now alas much mutilated, which might surely be transported to France without looking out of place ; and the façade of the South Basilica which seems in general plan only to want two flanking towers to take up its station, though not perhaps with the same ease as the nearby apse, in some French cathedral town.

In many of these North Syrian churches, particularly the earlier, the main entrance was not, as might be expected, through the west end, but in one of the lateral aisles, most often on the south side. At Kalat Seman, the main entrance was on the south for a special reason. The spur of hill on which the basilicas stand was not wide enough to carry the full breadth of the buildings, and the extremity of the west basilica had thus to be built out over the valley on a substructure. This meant that the church could not be entered from the west ; but it meant also that from the raised terrace the pilgrims could enjoy the astounding views which unfold, identifying for each other, as visitors will, whether pious or profane, the more salient features of the landscape : the valley of the Afrin spread out below, the mass of Kurd Dagh beyond, and farther still the Amanus range. Less to the North, they would have pointed out the Lake of Antioch, and have explained how the capital lay just obscured by the foothills. Directly to the south, they saw, almost at their feet, Deir Seman, and farther off the tangled Gebel Barisha, along whose slopes Christian towns and basilicas succeeded one another in almost endless procession. The terrace has fallen but the views remain. Indeed, much of the charm of Kalat Seman lies in the fact that at every point the eye moves off from the grey stone of the basilicas and the detail of carved leaf into vistas and blue mountains. The Saint could not have selected a finer spot to rear his pillar, and in his choice showed solicitude for at any rate one of his senses.

[This essay will form part of a forthcoming book on Syria and the Lebanon by Mr. Robin Fedden. The accompanying photographs are by Mr. A. Costa, with the exception of the bird's-eye view of Resafa, which is reproduced by courtesy of the Service des Antiquités, Beyrouth.]

The Columnist: *an American Phenomenon*

BY JOHN WAYNFLETE

Not long ago *The New Yorker* culled the following from the pages of the Mobile (Alabama) *Register*:

EDITOR'S NOTE TO READERS:

Drew Pearson's column is published without endorsement of The Register, as a service to its readers, solely because this column has become an effective factor in national politics and New Deal propaganda. The Register does not vouch for the accuracy of any statement in Pearson's column, nor does The Register editorially concur or recommend credence in any inference, any conclusion or any opinion appearing therein.

On this disclaimer *The New Yorker* commented:

It makes you wonder just what 'service to its readers' a newspaper can or should render. There used to be a feeling that one service a newspaper could perform was to vouch for the accuracy of the stuff it printed. Not any more, apparently. We are now in the syndicate era, when editors depend more and more on the personal opinions and findings of special writers whom they never see. 'Of course,' the papers say to their readers, 'we don't ask you to *believe* any of these guys.'

The average English newspaper reader, who has never heard of Drew Pearson may well wonder at the power exercised by a writer whom an editor feels compelled to print regularly although he disbelieves his statements and disapproves of his views. The answer is that Mr. Pearson's daily column, *Washington Merry-go-round*, is syndicated to something like 600 newspapers in the United States with a readership of perhaps 20 million. He also broadcasts every Sunday evening to an audience estimated in July, 1945, at 9 million. In a poll of his peers a year ago he was voted by an easy margin the most influential writer in the newspapers of America.

Both the influence of the columnist and the discomfort of the editor are exceptional in this particular case; yet it illustrates, however caricaturishly, one of the phenomena of American journalism which has been too little studied in other countries. The columnist may be a freelance writer like Pearson or Thomas L. Stokes: he may be on the staff of a newspaper like Arthur Krock or Max Lerner:

he may, like Westbrook Pegler or Paul Mallon, be a member of a feature syndicate (and in their particular case the association of King Features with the Hearst chain of newspapers imposes some degree of common editorial policy in the 'stable'). He may write a column daily like Samuel Grafton, or every other day like Anne O'Hare McCormick, or once a week like William Shirer, or occasionally like Pertinax. His distribution among the 2,004 daily newspapers of the U.S.A. will probably be handled on a contract basis by one of the big syndicates—United Features, Bell, King Features, New York Herald Tribune (affiliated with the newspaper), North American Newspaper Alliance, or another.

My own list of columnists dealing seriously with public affairs contains nearly 40 names. Of these hardly more than half a dozen will be familiar to the average reader of the *Cornhill* or *The Times*—Walter Lippmann, Sumner Welles, William Shirer certainly, Dorothy Thompson, Pertinax probably, Ernest Lindley perhaps—the last because he used to broadcast over the B.B.C., the others because they have written books; none of them as columnists. Yet the articles of DeWitt Mackenzie, for example, the Military analyst of the Associated Press, who sometimes digresses into the general field, appear in more than 800 newspapers.

The columnist is a comparatively recent addition to the American newspaper scene, and many *laudatores temporis acti* equate his rise with the decline in vigour and influence of the leading article. The great pioneers of the breed were Heywood Broun, O. O. MacIntyre and Will Rogers, all of whom died within the past decade and the first two of whom at least made six-figure incomes in their heyday. The writing of a syndicated column, it will be seen, can be a lucrative profession: and indeed some of its practitioners have the manner, as well as the income of, movie stars. As for its power for reputation, it is significant that Ernie Pyle, at the time of his death the best-loved and probably the most widely read newspaperman in America, was comparatively unknown until he was adopted by a feature syndicate. Conversely, the late President's wife thought it no indignity to indite, from the White House, a daily chronicle of her doings and opinions under the title 'My Day,' which was (and still is, though she has dropped the title) syndicated by United Features.

It is convenient to distinguish the columnist proper from the gossip writer—Ed. Sullivan's 'Little Old New York,' Louis Sobol's 'New York Cavalcade'—who has his opposite numbers in England. But there are a handful of borderline cases, just as the *Evening Standard's* 'Londoner' has some political influence. Walter Winchell, most famous of them all, Elsa Maxwell, specialist in parties, even raconteur Leonard Lyons, often use their nominally frivolous columns to express a political point of view. There are also, of course, a number of

specialist columns—‘Labour News and Comment,’ ‘The Air World’ and the like.

In the English newspaper world the columnist in the American sense is a rare bird. There are Mr. Garvin and A. J. Cummings, Dorothy Crisp and John Gordon; there are Scrutator, Liberator and Atticus; Janus and Critic sometimes qualify, so does Swaffer and so did William Hickey in Tom Driberg’s time. But the signed article of opinion as a regular feature of a newspaper is not a normal constituent of English journalism, and attempts to graft American columnists on to English papers have always failed. This is not simply a case of *autres pays, autres moeurs*. The difference of practice in the two countries is due to two main causes, one of newspaper organisation, the other of national temperament and national habit in the formation of public policy. Let us consider them in turn.

The British Isles are about the size of the State of Illinois (not the largest in the Union). The London morning papers are national papers because they can reach virtually every breakfast-table from John O’ Groats to Land’s End, and seven-figure circulations are the rule rather than the exception. They are also national papers because London is the predominant centre of news-making, news-gathering and news-production. This is said without any disparagement of the excellence of the provincial press: it is simply a fact of geography. In America, by contrast, there are a score of papers across the country with circulations in the same six-figure brackets as the New York *Times* or *Herald Tribune* (the tabloids admittedly run much higher), each with their regional pre-eminence. The Washington *Post*, the Chicago *Tribune*, the Cleveland *Plain Dealer*, the Baltimore *Sun*, the Louisville *Courier-Journal* or the San Francisco *Chronicle* would consider themselves the equal of any newspaper in the country, and their readers would loyally agree. Each has, naturally, its editorial policy and its own news-gathering staff of correspondents: but in a country of three million square miles inhabited by a people with lively interests it was natural that the geographical compartmentation of this system should be modified by some nation-wide co-operation. In the field of news, this is supplied by the wire agencies, on which local papers depend in the same way as, and probably more completely than, their opposite numbers in England on Reuter or the Press Association. In the field of comment and opinion, an analogous function is performed by the syndicated columnist, so that a man can usually find his favourite mentor in one or another of the local papers no matter where he may wake up.

The other reason why America has columnists and we do not is, not so much perhaps that a great many Americans prefer their opinions ready made and their news predigested, as that America is apt to do its policy-making in public; and the various columnists are as vocal

and as opinionated as any Hyde Park orator. Moreover, Washington has found that the columnist, whether press or radio, is an excellent medium for setting off a trial balloon or securing damaging publicity for a scheme of somebody else's. When, therefore, two groups in, shall we say, the State Department take different views on what the Administration should do in a given issue, one or the other (or even both) may decide to ' leak ' the gist of a memorandum or the outline of a proposal to some suitable and receptive commentator with the reasonable certainty that it will within a few days get a thorough airing in the press, on the radio and very possibly on the floor of Congress. But even without any such assistance, the columnist, like any other newspaperman, loves a news-beat or a revelation and some have been known to go to considerable lengths to achieve them. Drew Pearson, for instance, whom President Roosevelt branded publicly as a liar, is an uncannily expert scooper and has several times embarrassed the Administration by quoting verbatim from secret telegrams not only of his own but of other governments (there is no Official Secrets Act in the U.S.A.), so that the accepted American principle of unrestricted public discussion is by no means confined to purely national affairs.

The reader who recalls the dilemma of the *Mobile Register* may well ask at this point how the printing alongside the leading article of a columnist or (often) several columnists, over whose views on a given subject the editor has no control, can possibly be compatible with any consistent editorial policy. The answer is twofold. First, it is understood that a columnist's opinions are his own and not the paper's. But, second, the editor of a paper with a strongly marked policy normally only contracts for the output of a columnist whose general views and style are sufficiently sympathetic to those of his newspaper to be acceptable to the people who buy that paper. If a columnist diverges too far or too often from the area of sympathy, his contract will not be renewed. Westbook Pegler, for instance, when his anti-labour, anti-new-deal line became, on one particular issue, too violent even for the Scripps-Howard chain, was relinquished, after an acrimonious public exchange with his sponsors, to the welcoming arms of the Hearst group. Moreover, though the editor may not tamper with a columnist's text, he can (though he only on very rare occasions does) omit a whole article or a section of an article, if he cannot stomach it. The *Washington Post* once ran an official contradiction of the facts on which a columnist's article, was based : the compositor put it at the foot of the column, but left out rule, space or paragraph mark, so that it appeared as the last sentence of the article and provoked a very satisfactory number of horseLaughs in the National Press Club.

It has been alleged, and this is a delicate subject, that some columnists definitely write to the orders of the chain or syndicate for

which they work. It is no doubt possible that on a particular issue some common 'line' may be agreed on and suggested, if not imposed. But in general it is probably true to say that a predetermined harmony of ideas provides all the conformity needed. A strongly liberal paper, such as the *New York Post*, or the *Chicago Sun*, would not sign up nationalists like Paul Mallon, xenophobes like John O'Donnell or reactionaries like George Sokolsky. Similarly, papers in whose pages those three writers are at home—e.g. the *New York Journal-American* (Hearst), the *New York Daily News* (Patterson) and the *New York Sun* respectively—would hardly consider printing on their foreign affairs pages the columns of such thoughtful liberal internationalists as Samuel Grafton, Roscoe Drummond or Joseph Harsch, let alone a Wilsonian like David Lawrence or a crusader like Edgar Mowrer: while on the domestic front they would tend to choose a good rabid anti-new-dealer like George Rothwell Brown, Frank Kent or Constantine Brown, and not Ernest Lindley or Marquis Childs.

These generalisations, however, do not apply with equal force to the large number of middle-of-the-road papers up and down the country, nor even to those many conservative or liberal papers in which political convictions may have to make some concessions to the circulation manager. A popular columnist brings in readers, just as the *Chicago Tribune*'s huge circulation is hopefully believed by some to be based on, and its readers to restrict themselves to, its first-class sports writers and comics. Again, some editors, without going so far as the *Mobile Register*, consider that a variety of opinions gives salt to the news. But whatever the motive, it is certainly true that the columns of the American press exhibit, to the discriminating *voeur*, many curiously matched bedfellows. The *Washington Star* carries Constantine Brown alongside Lowell Mellett, the *Los Angeles Times* Lippmann alongside Frank Kent, the *Portland Oregonian* Paul Mallon alongside Marquis Childs, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* Dorothy Thompson alongside Frank Kent; while the *Seattle Times* (a very conservative paper) prints David Lawrence and Pertinax (both liberals). Similarly Pegler and Grafton, who probably see eye to eye on no single subject on earth, keep company alike in the conservative *Indianapolis Star* and the liberal *Charleston Gazette*.

There have been cases in which a newspaper's pages have been enlivened by debate between a columnist and his editor, or between two columnists on the same page. The editor of the *New York Post*, for example, carried on a brisk controversy with columnist Dorothy Thompson on the German question; while those two redoubtable pundits, Walter Lippmann and Sumner Welles, have disagreed very illuminatingly in the *New York Herald Tribune* on high questions of foreign policy. On an even more electric matter Mr. Lippmann disagreed with the *Herald Tribune* itself, for in a Republican paper—

and one of the most influential party stalwarts, at that—he declared for Roosevelt in the 1944 election.

The New York *Times*, it should be noted, carries no syndicated columnists. It has some of its own, each among the most distinguished in their field : in the Sunday paper Hanson Baldwin (military analyst), in the daily, Mrs. Anne O'Hare McCormick ('Abroad'), and Mr. Krock ('In the Nation'). The last-named, incidentally, has been voted by his Washington colleagues the correspondent exerting the most influence on Washington. Another New York paper, the evening *Post*, stands at the other end of the scale : it is hardly a newspaper so much as a collection of opinions. In addition to 'The Sports Parade,' 'Your Baby and Mine,' 'Words and Music,' 'Two on the Aisle,' 'The World of Food,' 'The Fashion Show,' 'Americans All' (by the Rev. Dr. Poling), 'Vagabonding with Vanderbilt' (gossip by Cornelius Vanderbilt), Orson Welles's 'Almanac,' 'Hollywood Is My Beat' (by Sidney Skolsky), 'It Happened Last Night' (by Earl Wilson, the *Post*'s 'saloon editor'), 'Know Thyself' (by Wells Carr), 'Your Dollars And The War' (by Sylvia F. Porter), 'Labour News and Comment' (by Victor Riesel), Elsa Maxwell's 'Party Line,' 'The Lyons Den' (by Leonard Lyons) and 'A World To Live In' (by Dorothy Norman)—all specialised or semi-specialised columns—the *Post* offers you Dorothy Thompson or Edgar Ansel Mowrer on world affairs, 'Washington Memo' by Charles van Devander and William O. Player Jr., 'The State of The Nation' by Marquis Childs and 'I'd Rather Be Right' by Samuel Grafton. Not to mention a leading article.

The *Post*'s cast of performers display a fair number of those sprightly titles which remind an Englishman so forcibly (and often so irreverently) of the catch phrases which are obligatory on the music-hall stage : Miss X 'The Forces' Sweetheart,' Miss Y 'Just a song and a dance,' Mr. Z 'Fifty Faces under one hat.' Grafton's title alludes, of course, to the classic phrase of Henry Clay 'I would rather be right than President.' 'Washington Memo' matches the 'Washington Merry-go-round' of Drew Pearson, the 'Today in Washington' of David Lawrence, John O'Donnell's 'Capitol Stuff.' Pegler uses the label 'Fair Enough,' though some editors omit it, Bob Considine 'On the Line,' Benjamin de Casseres 'The March of Events,' Paul Mallon 'The News behind the News,' Dorothy Thompson 'On the Record,' Lowell Mellett 'On the other Hand,' Lippmann 'Today and Tomorrow.' But the finest of all is undoubtedly 'Life with Salt on the Side,' by E. V. Durling, 'The Guy that knows Everything,' which provides edification for readers of the New York *Journal-American* and other subscribers to King Features Syndicate, Inc.

It was suggested above that one of the circumstances which has favoured the growth of the columnist system is the regionalised char-

acter of the American press. It remains to be seen what inroads may be made on these 'spheres of influence' by further increases in the speed of communication and the extension of arrangements by which one newspaper is set up, printed and distributed in several widely separated places at the same time (just as the *Manchester Guardian* prints also in London, or the *Daily Express* in Manchester and Glasgow). A number of New York papers printed special editions in San Francisco during the Conference. And if London's *Daily Mail* can produce a New York edition from plates flown across the Atlantic, or *Time* magazine print 20 editions in six continents, America may well see before long attempts at capturing a real national circulation by those dailies which already have a national influence and some national sale even a day or two late.

Such a development might cut into the territory of the columnists, for it would add nationally read leaders to the comparatively small number now syndicated among papers in the same ownership group, and would thereby provide a much larger body of widely available editorial opinion. But most good judges consider that the newspaper columnist has come to stay. Quite apart from that considerable number of them who are recognised as performing a function of real value in forming and informing public opinion, Americans like personal views and are indulgent to irresponsibility; they like articles to be signed; and even the flightier or more obviously prejudiced columnists by and large do enough prying and muck-raking and crusading to be regarded as useful puncturers of official reticence, homespun philosophers, rugged individualists, disrespecters of persons—in short, as upstanding 100 per cent. Americans.

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My Tree

BY WILLIAM SANSOM

Imagine my predicament : To find myself in my poverty the owner of a great resource, so great a resource that I cannot begin to assess the final extent of its dimension, which can seem to me only infinite, of endless potentiality—and yet I am powerless even to touch it ! I, Peter Wedekind, assistant polisher, twenty-eight years, seated in the garden adjoining my room in this derelict northern suburb !

Behind me lies the room itself, with its stained walls, its greasy couch, its curtains of ragged green tablecloth, its inkstains, its soiled cups, its breath of damp. The mould breeds in each dark corner, desolate clouds of damp creep up the wallpaper, the little spawns of dry-rot leap unseen from board to board, the crumbling earth encroaches from beneath the boards. Once I measured a little roll of earth that had thrust itself from beneath the loose skirting board—it had advanced an inch in a night ! Something was thrusting into my room ; or perhaps the earth itself—terrible thought—was on the march !

But here I sit in the flowering summer garden and my room lies behind, almost forgotten. The garden accompanies the room—it is mine, absolutely mine, according to a legal arrangement with the landlord. The grass is mine, the flowers are mine, the anthills, the weeds, the stones, the twigs, the earth. I can do what I wish with all these things . . . I can dig a trench straight across the garden, or, if I wish, I can erect mounds. Then I can raze these mounds to a level, I can administer water and create a jungle of hungry living things. Walking past a bed of flowers, I can run my hand through the leaves and petals. I can touch, I can measure, I can know, I can possess.

Yet, sitting here among the sunlit flowers and the green weeds, the sun never warms me. I sit in the shade.

The shade is cast by the branches of my tree.

Its bole, which must measure three feet across, stands embedded in my earth just a few paces in front of my chair. From there it climbs to an incredible height, shooting forth all manner of branches, extending in numberless tiers its ascending patterns of leaf.

I cannot judge how high this tree is.

I have walked round the houses to the next street and from there I have seen the top of my tree, which rises as high, but no higher than the surrounding chimneys. Yet I sit beneath it, and looking

up I try again to estimate its height—but now it is different, I am lost in the branches and the leaves, layer upon layer, pattern upon pattern, as they recede up to the sky, as they achieve so great a height that my eye can never discern the topmost leaves, as the sky seems to lower itself towards my tree, so that perhaps—as I sometimes think—the two meet. Seeing it thus, I cannot imagine that this is the same tree that only topped the chimneys—and if it was, then which version of my eyes must I accept as true? Perhaps one can only judge these things from where one stands from minute to minute—yet I cannot ever believe that the tree has not its own true identity, its own exact size, its independence of my miserable self.

It is such a huge tree, such a giant to grow in this tiny garden. And it is all mine! It is mine utterly, to keep, to stroke, to chop. I could go at it with a hatchet, hacking at the bole so that the bark flies grizzling all around! Nobody in the world could stop me! No policeman could grip me for touching my tree, no neighbour could go crying to the authorities. It is all mine, irrefutably, indefinitely mine. And yet—I am powerless! I cannot possess my tree, although it is mine. Of course I could cut at the bark, I could pick at the leaves, I could attach to my head a dental mirror and scrutinise the inner recesses of each dark wormhole. But such a survey would contain only the few feet of trunk immediately accessible to me, and those few feet represent no more than a fraction, a pitiable fraction of the whole. I could extend my survey higher from the rungs of a step-ladder, but even then the fraction would merely be doubled and thus remain a fraction. I doubt whether any ladder would be tall enough to reach the top, even a builder's ladder, and in any case I could never climb such a ladder—I have no head for heights. I know so well that if I penetrated to any distance from the ground my mind would wash blank with the grey vertiginous fears, my thoughts would scatter and lose themselves, I would be out of my depth, bemused, giddy, sick with the profundity into which I had entered, and I would be sent clambering to the ground, humiliated beyond belief by my own possession. I am therefore beset with an insurmountable obstacle from the very first—I know myself to be physically incapable of ever understanding my tree. Physically—even on the very lowest plane I am decisively defeated! But that does not prevent me from devoting endless hours to theoretical research, to speculation, to dreams. This I cannot stop. It is too much—to possess and not to know! One is doomed to a life of hopeless speculation.

My garden, you see, is no more than twenty or so feet long, no broader, a mere patch. I value it, but I see that it is finally not more than a patch. And then—monstrous, incredible, freakish—

there grows out of this miserable patch a thick tapering trunk of wood and fibre and leaf, so that, perpendicular, it is perhaps four times as long as the flat patch, perhaps twenty times more, and beneath the earth its roots twine, oh—for ever. I cannot see my roots. I cannot touch my high branches. I can walk and stamp all over my patch, but these other things that are mine I simply can neither see nor touch ! Never, never, never !

I can tell you—the thought of this has begun to sicken me, to bring the sweat to my neck, sometimes to make me cry with a child's fury. Who knows what my tree is capable of, who knows what I might not possess ? Completely unknown to me there may be nests, great nests tucked away in the uppermost branches, even in the lower branches that are carefully screened from me by other branches, still lower, almost accessible ! There may be holes in which live companies of squirrels—squirrels I have never seen, whose footsteps will never reach my ears, they are so high, so soft, so hidden.

And sometimes others attempt to penetrate my tree. Though in their journeys they penetrate higher into my tree than I have ever done, I can at least console myself that their journeys take them only over a single path. They can only know that part of the tree upon which they have actually trodden. I refer, of course, to the cats ; often these inquisitive cats can be seen clawing their way up the bark and losing themselves in my leaves. At this point I never fail to experience an unbearable agitation. The cats disappear into my property with their searching eyes, their ready claws ; and I—I the owner !—cannot know from this point whether they go or what they see. Later I observe them slinking down, sometimes with a surfeit of calm in their yellow eyes, sometimes running down the vertical bark in terror, so that the noise of their scampering claws sounds like a single screech of tearing paper. Then it is that they disappear over the wall with little howls of terror. But what have these cats seen, what have they done ? Have they found in some crevice a nest of fine fat white suckling spiders and filled with these their silent cats' bellies ? Or have they met, face to face, round some strange contortion of branch, a great bird that has flown at them with its red eye, its sharp clucking beak—so that terrified they have fled earthwards ?

Yes, perhaps a bird ! You see, there are the birds, too. I haven't forgotten about the birds. These birds come from everywhere, flying into my tree, nesting there, hopping up and down my branches, chirping, cooing, shrieking, invading me easily on their flowing wings ; and never telling me, never. For how could they ? I do not chirp. I'm no bundle of feathers and egg. I am the owner, the man. Yet these insignificant vagrants know each a little more than I. And what of the larvæ, the locust, the rare scarlet

butterfly, the ancient kite, the jackdaw's diamond, the murdered pelvis dropped once from an airship and since bleached white in its new crutch of high wood? All these treasures of mine may be up there—all hidden from me, immutably inaccessible.

But sometimes I forget my irritation with these possible treasures. Then, for a while, I can lose myself in a peaceful oblivion. I sink into contemplation of the great beauty that resides in my upward leaves. From where I sit, at the base of the bole—at some point about the middle of the tree with the unseen roots beneath and the ascending trunk above—there I can see quite clearly a certain proportion of my tree. That part is no mystery. The mystery begins above and below this point. As for the roots—I can dismiss these with a certain peace of mind; that is because they are beneath me, and for that reason it seems that they at least are accessible. If I decided to dig it is quite possible that finally I would unearth each root, even unto each thin white fibrous end. In this way these roots present the illusion of a task already accomplished—though in my deepest heart I know that I would never have the patience, nor indeed the strength, to dig so much or so deep. No—really the roots do not worry me. But the ascending trunk—that is quite a different matter. In these airy upper reaches lies my true agony.

How beautiful the leaves are! They are shaped like little green hearts. As I gaze upwards, a thousand of these are trellised against the white blue sky. It is as though in the sky there resided the waters of a distant estuary wandering through the islands and inlets of a green land. And how green this land is! The lowest leaves, in shadow, seem to shine with a dead green, like leaves touched with the phosphorus of twilight. And higher there are more leaves, whole planes of leaves, upon which the sun shines from above, so that they appear from beneath to be liquid and yellow as underwater plants. It seems as though wet green blood itself shines like a heart-shaped light from within each leaf. And further, further, higher, higher, until the leaves are small, flecked with shadows and touched into fire by a high sun that seems to belong to another day altogether. Curiously, this appears like the remembered sunlight of some time of holiday from long ago. This sunlight is so aerial, so high, fresh, pure—like the crystal light that shines on the very top of a tall flagpole white against the holiday blue sky.

And through these green leaves—green as a dry water rippling in shadow and wind, in light and the interplay of shining and fading greens, in calm and storm, in pattern and in sudden gusts of chaos that as suddenly decline into a fresh integration—through these green leaves there burrows upwards the great bark trunk. Black and grizzled, ridged and furrowed with fat bark, this trunk winds upwards like a giant worm searching. It burrows into the green, it seems

no longer to support the leaves. And from it spurt auxiliary snouts, its branches, elongated and on the smell. And all around the green leaves play, ceiling on ceiling, devouring the branches as often as they shoot forth. Sometimes these leaves look to me like little green lice clustered round the old serpent, eating at him with their millions of tiny teeth—and yet the serpent continually throws out new limbs as the old are chewed off, for in its stubborn body lie eternal resources, a sluggish yeast-vein of rising sap, an accreting breeding life.

You see. First I think of the leaves as hearts—and the next moment I am talking about lice! The longer I gaze up into the tree the more morbid I become. I begin my contemplation lost in its beauty, I end by hating each leaf with all the enslaved disgust in me. I hate the tree. I hate my own tree. I defend myself against humiliation by hate. I hate because I cannot have, I cannot reach, I cannot know, I can neither touch nor understand nor solve. Yet even so I must continue with my efforts. I must hate and search, and do both these at the same time. Also the beauty, the mystery tempt me . . . and more than this . . . perhaps more than anything else, the thing that tantalises me is the knowledge, an indisputable but utterly unproved knowledge, that hidden in the tree are great potentialities, great resources, and an ultimate meaning that is of essential value. Somewhere in the deep sea of pattern lies a spring to be touched, a leaf to be turned, a branch to be swept aside—and all will be revealed. But . . . though this is possible, it will never be done. At least, never by me. That is the most terrible part. I know from the start that I strive in vain. Yet I must continue to strive. I am a slave to what I have and I do not have it.

The days and the nights drift by. Each evening as I lie on my couch and watch through the windows the setting sun turn my tree from green to black, I sink deeper and deeper into the tireless stupor that controls me. My wakeful hours are spent in ever more feverish speculation. I lie down exhausted, yet constantly turn over in my exhausted mind the barren fruit of the day. Food is no longer a pleasure or a ritual: I do not see people: I take no interest. This maddening tree steals me—why does it stand there? What is it? Why do I own it? To what purpose? These are questions that can no longer be avoided . . . the smaller topics of living pale and disappear beside such fundamental questions. I feel suddenly that at twenty-eight years of age my life is halved, and I only have a few ever speedier years in which to solve the question. There is no time, I must concentrate on the one matter.

Last night I lay down as usual and watched the twilight deepen around the great shadow of my tree. The air seemed to darken and

grow purple, yet at the same time the moon rose, and the distant sky grew lighter. I watched the silhouette of the tree appear through this alternating weirdness of shadow and cold light. My eyelids drooped. As my vision became blurred, so the outline of the tree grew sharper in the gradually ascendant light. In this way the tree remained constant—yet I was lowering myself into a half-sleep. With a last whirring sigh, as though it were stretching its arms into a yawn, the clock gave a long tick and stopped. There was only silence. It was so utterly silent then that the air seemed to be dripping all around, like a rain of silence. In this still atmosphere I sank deeper into my lethargy, watching the tree, which never once looked at me, but stood out aloof in the night garden. Yet, though physically sinking, though my blood was running slower and my tendons relaxing—somewhere in the core of my neck a stimulation bristled. I grew more and more alert. Perhaps the silence had put me on my guard. Abruptly my thoughts became clear and momentous. They loomed hugely and with absolute definition, so hugely that they seemed in danger of toppling over, like those last vivid thoughts struggling beneath the anaesthetist's cup.

I thought : 'They are wrong. We do not grow old continuously. We grow old only in fits and starts. We grow old only in terms of our realisation of our age. For five years we decay, and then suddenly one morning we face the mirror and see a new face. It is only on that particular morning that we recognise the face, and then only does it become real. So with our minds—we are sporadically waking up to new stages. A cycle of behaviour completes itself, and suddenly one morning we are faced with a new mind. The residue of its memory may not be new, its manner of working may remain the same. But it is new in the only matter that really constitutes a mind—the food it seeks. A mind is a mind not by what is in it, but by what it seeks. On a few mornings in life we wake up with new minds, we are faced with changed vistas, we realise a different plane. Just as if we had aged.'

Either this obsession with my tree had begun a new age of thought, or in that very moment I was entering upon a new phase. The thought was not new, it might have occurred to anyone . . . but, new or old, every thought must at one time be personally realized. And in the moment of personal realisation it must bring with it all its intrinsic shock. A moment of great detachment, and at the same time of great selfconsciousness, it is like the second that curtains the first thoughts on waking from sleep, when the brain acts clearly, yet the self is distant : the self is distant, but it is preponderantly somewhere, and at the time one cannot but be aware of its tremendous power, all its forces can be felt to gather and hesitate before flinging themselves in grand assault upon the virgin brain.

So I realised with a shock what a change had occurred in me—the time for speculation was past ! This was a time to act ! I decided then, once and for all, upon a series of excursions.

Once and for all I decided to challenge my vertigo and climb the tree, climb to the very top, climb along each branch, scouring with my eyes each inch of bark, leaving no single leaf unscrutinised. But it would be wrong to approach this matter with a ladder, it would lie too far off the trunk, it would bypass too much. No, I decided in favour of staples. I went to the shops to purchase iron staples, prongs to hammer into the bark as I ascend. But alas, the shops could offer no more than two staples. I wished for four—they offered me two. They offered me only half what I desired !

So a ladder it had to be. A ladder—I knew as soon as this certainty was thrust upon me—a ladder that would provide no return. For ladders disappear. Ladders go. It is almost as if, as one ascends, the rungs beneath wither and fall off, the wood itself disintegrates, shreds into a paste of disbelief—how could one have reached so high, on what possible engine ? And, in actual fact, as soon as one has left such a ladder for the branches, as soon as the ladder is left untenanted, leaning innocently against a tree—then someone will be there to take it away.

Of course, I need not do this—I could cut down my tree. But would that not in itself defeat my purpose ? Would the tree not collapse within itself, would it not begin to change even in its swift downward rush, would it not be a different tree and destroyed by the time it could touch my hand ?

I knew too that I could come to terms with my curiosity, I could temporise for the rest of my life, I could compromise. But then how sluggish, how deceitful, how impotent life would become ! My bones would grow soft.

I could move away, I could find another garden . . . but then there would be another tree.

No, the ladder it must be, the climb from which there is no return—and where perhaps there is no destination.

Ce que dit Elsa

BY LOUIS ARAGON

(Translated by FRANCES CORNFORD)

You say my verse is difficult—not quite
So dark perhaps as I'd have liked it made !
I wish our stolen joy were shuttered tight
 For fear the chinks of light
Should make the photograph that pleased you fade.

But if our love can start a world, you say,
Then it's a world where things are simply said.
Away with Lancelot, Pelleas and Kaye !
 Vivien, Iseult away !
Their mirror was an ill-reflecting blade.

My eyes hold love. Read there, and never trouble
With high-flown rhymes, old philtres for the heart ;
Ruins by daylight are but heaps of rubble ;
 Shadows at noon are double
And quite confound the sciomancers' art.

Night over day should not have pride of place,
Shame to a heart untouched by tender sky,
Nor suddenly un-armed by a child's face,
 Having no tears to praise
An early flower, a street-song passing by.

Leave for a while the thunder of your keys,
Our climate is for simple men today,
Who cannot hunt a phrase through dictionaries,
 Whom only plain words please,
Repeated low and pondered on their way.

To win me now bring water pure enough
To quench their longings, and procure them rest.
Blood from your wound your song must be, my love,
 My thatcher on the roof,
Singing for birds who have not where to nest.

To Be Continued!—thus your song must write,
Subscribing hope to our grim Serial Tale;
The human voice must quell the brass's might,
Give reason as a light
To those whose course seemed set for death and Hell.

In places void of love your song must be,
For those who slave and bleed in cold and loss,
A tune to move their feet less heavily,
A daybreak cup of tea,
A friend beside the stations of their cross.

Is it worth singing, truly worth the pains,
Except for those your dreams remember well?
The thought of them is like the drag of chains,
It courses through your veins,
And fills your heart like wind that fills a sail.

You'd have my love—you have it, heaven knows;
Why then, my future portrait, must, you say—
As a live worm dwells in a petalled rose—
Theme within theme enclose,
And wed to love the arising sun of day.

A Book of Behaviour

BY DAVID PAUL

To have been the bosom-friend and literary collaborator of Raphael ; to have had one's only book, or rather a fragment of it, pirated and published by Vittoria Colonna (the lady was full of apologies when the theft was discovered, but delighted that it led to the authorised and complete publication, in April, 1528, 'at the house of Aldo Romano and of his son-in-law Andrea d'Asola' at Venice, in folio, 'in the noble type called Aldine') ; to have been the subject of the Emperor Charles V's quite special and personal admiration ; all these honours belonged to Baldassare Castiglione. The book, of course, was his *Cortegiano*. He and Raphael were nearly of an age, and their trust, admiration and friendship seem never to have been clouded. An extract from a letter will show how Raphael valued his judgment : 'Signor Conte : I have made several different designs, according to your original suggestion. Everyone is satisfied, not to say delighted, but I cannot say I have satisfied my own judgment, because I am doubtful if I have satisfied yours. I am sending them for you to choose which you think best . . . As for the Galatea, I should consider myself a master, if there were in it half the things you tell me ; but I recognise in your words the love you bear me.' Together they studied Vitruvius, explored the ruins of Rome, and speculated on Roman art and architecture, with a passion and curiosity, above all with a reverence, that seem strange to us today. Castiglione is certainly responsible for the actual writing of Raphael's famous letter to Pope Leo X, in response to the papal request that the artist re-fashion ancient Rome according to the designs indicated by such ruins as remained, as he had also helped him in measuring out those remains and looking up their descriptions in the available authors. But the plan was doomed to sudden frustration. 'I am not well,' Castiglione wrote to his mother in July, 1520, 'and I do not feel as if I were in Rome, because I can no longer find here my poor Raphael.' Raphael had died in April of the same year.

As for Vittoria Colonna's indiscretion, she may have felt herself justified in so far as she seems to have been the first to suggest to Castiglione something of the plan of his work, though he assures her in a letter that he had already begun writing with the same idea in mind. But whether it was dilettantism or devotion on the part of the author, he was an unconscionable time writing it and

quite probably would never have finished it at all, if fragmentary publication had not compelled him. We are informed by a modern editor, Scherilli, that 'he had worked at it assiduously from 1508 until 1515, and went on re-arranging, correcting and retouching until 1524'; until, that is, he had to leave for Spain, as Clement VII's ambassador to the court of Charles V. Historically, Charles V casts a rather baleful shadow on Italy, the shadow of Spanish domination, of a revived medievalism and the Counter-reformation. The 'Sack' of Rome took place in 1527. It is hard to imagine what Castiglione felt when the Pope whom he represented became a fugitive from, and then a captive in, the hands of the Emperor with whom he represented him. It seems certain that he remained on the best of terms with Charles V. Perhaps the situation was not so very novel to one who was well acquainted with the political orgies of renaissance Italy; in fact, similar situations must have arisen more than once. The 'onore' of which the men of the time talked so much was a conception of personal honour, which they were able to keep sophistically intact in a chaos of political licence. Certainly Castiglione remained as envoy in Toledo until his death in 1529; and at his funeral no less a person than the emperor himself insisted on pronouncing the oration. When a relative ventured to thank him for the peculiar honour paid the family, he replied: 'Yo vos digo que es muerto uno de los mejores caballeros del mundo.' 'One of the best knights'—the praise seems to belong to a period three hundred years earlier.

Like Sidney, Castiglione has a personal distinction which raises perhaps more expectations than his work will satisfy. But he has distinction as a writer as well, and again like Sidney, he has a graciousness which makes up for a certain amount of tedium. Nevertheless after reading *Il Cortegiano* for a while one feels irresistibly that Italy at the time of the Renaissance must have been, among so many other things, a paradise of bores—bores of more than one type, but chiefly of the learned—platonising, ciceronating, plutarchising bores. One of the most typical of them figures in these pages, as well as in innumerable letters and works of his own—the exalted, inexhaustible and now largely inscrutable Bembo, he who conducted a long epistolary and poetic love affair with Lucrezia Borgia. She appears to have awarded him a lock of her hair, but otherwise to have remained impassive. In fact one cannot help suspecting that Lucrezia's secret was sheer dullness. Surrounded by a circle of people whose energies overflowed into every conceivable channel of activity, her very apathy was somehow magnetic, and gave rise inevitably to a feeling that it concealed something. A remarkable amount of research has been carried out to find precisely what it did conceal, and since nothing, or next to nothing,

has been found, it is really sensible to conclude that nothing was concealed. She is that version of the eternal feminine which, if born into the position of Jane Austen's Lady Bertram, sits on a sofa and nurses a pug for a lifetime. Triumphally entering Ferrara as duchess, to the accompaniment of processions and masquerades, Lucrezia probably felt very much less excitement than the bride of a Victorian parson on her first entry to the parsonage.

Another member of the circle, Giuliano de' Medici, who took refuge at Urbino when his family was exiled from Florence, talks at times a kind of nonsense which leaves us with a very poor impression of the much-vaunted conversation in earlier Medicean circles. This, for example: 'Heat in itself is more perfect than cold; but this does not follow with regard to mixed and composite things, because if it were so, that body which were the hottest would be the most perfect . . .' Castiglione has a quick and natural ear for individual styles of conversation, and it is reasonable to accept what he gives us as faithful examples. Reading his book reveals that a civilisation which has travelled so far in other respects may still only be learning the art of talking, and may still be laboriously devising details of social behaviour which are later taken for granted. Clearly, conversation was a highly conscious performance, as much so as that other favourite diversion, singing to the viola, and was listened to in exactly the same spirit.

As well as writing a book of behaviour, Castiglione avowedly sets out with the purpose of giving a picture of the court of Urbino. A modern reader can only lament that, the interests of his time being so different from ours, he gives us little or nothing of the kind of detail that is important to us, though it probably passed almost unobserved by himself and the people of his time. Human consciousness and human articulacy are variable factors in history, and help to make much of it unintelligible. A further hindrance is offered by the fact that even Castiglione is infected by the current mania for classical parody and paraphrase. It can be gathered, however, that the *salon* of Urbino in 1510, if it had some things in common with the French *salon* of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, had as much or more in common with the Courts of Love of Eleanor of Aquitaine. But it has this in common with the later type, that men predominated in numbers, and almost entirely in the talk. Then, as later, it was the woman's function to keep the circle in being, and to control and guide the conversation, as unobtrusively as possible. She also, like her predecessor Eleanor, decreed the subject if one was lacking, and decided the argument if it could not otherwise be settled. We are also told that the guests were seated in a circle, ladies alternating with gentlemen as far as numbers allowed. Although their sex provides a large part of the

theme of the conversation, only two of the ladies ever become articulate.

Castiglione has a good deal of acuteness, without a hint of the malice which can be so agreeable in a French writer of a similar type. Now and again he shows how little certain social foibles change from one society to another :

'Lately, a motet was performed in the presence of the Duchess and it did not please at all, nor was considered good, until it was later revealed that it was a composition of Josquin des Pres.'

He has a directness and simplicity in exposing motive which, when found to a heightened degree in Machiavelli, can be mistaken for cynicism. He gives us glimpses of daily life which reveal that immediacy which has always been a part of the Italian temperament, though then it had much more scope.

'Some are fond of music, and no matter whom they are talking to, whenever there is a pause in the conversation, begin to sing *sotto voce*; others, whether they are going through a street or a church, are perpetually dancing; others, meeting a friend, in a square or other public place, immediately set to sword-play or wrestling, whichever is their favourite pastime.' We are then given the example of 'a young cardinal we have at Rome' whose invariable habit was to invite his visitors, whether friends or strangers, into his garden, and stripped to the shirt, insist on a practice bout of wrestling or jumping. Gentlemen are advised not to flourish their daggers too much in the presence of ladies, or talk about the men they have killed. Ladies are asked not to over-indulge their fondness for shining cosmetics, as their friends might find it more embarrassing than flattering to find themselves so clearly mirrored.—Their appearance must always have been a source of interest, shaven as they were to the point of baldness, with glittering complexions, and festooned with the endlessly inventive jewellery which can be seen in any contemporary portrait.

The steep transition from the flatness of the actual to the exaltation of the newly-discovered idealisms was one of the comic or bathetic features of the day, and we are presented with both extremes in an admirably unprejudiced fashion. The relation between the sexes is one of the chief subjects of conversation, and here it is, as seen by the uninspired :

'We ourselves have made a law, that in us men a dissolute life is no vice, nor failing, nor ill-fame; while for women it is such an extreme disgrace and humiliation, that she of whom evil is once spoken, whether it be true or false, is forever disgraced . . . For women being such imperfect animals, and of little or no worth in respect to men, it was necessary to impose some restraint of shame or fear on them, so as perforce to give them some good quality. And

continence is more necessary in them than any other virtue, so that one may be certain of one's children.'

It was a certainty which very few enjoyed ; and very few of the gentlemen who did not enjoy it troubled to remind themselves, as this speaker is reminded a moment later, that at least half of the responsibility must necessarily be theirs. The other extreme is presented in the closing monologue on ideal love, delivered by Bembo, in which he advocates a kind of exaltation, on what might be called the surrogate or canal-and-lock principle, which is possibly more akin to Heard than to Plato.

Wit was one of the re-discoveries of the time, and the reader is supplied with a whole magazine of witticisms, all faithfully analysed and classified according to Cicero. Unfortunately most of them show that if the principles of wit have not altered, its quality has certainly not deteriorated. But one of them must be quoted, as it could not be characteristic of any other period. One Biagin Crivello, an ageing *condottiere*, on the death of a priest at Milan, begged the duke for the benefice, as he was in search of some support for his old age and retirement. The duke, however, had another beneficiary in view. When no sort of argument seemed to prevail, Biagin produced his last shot : 'Pray do not let it be said, my lord, that I killed a priest for nothing.'

The Irish Unionist's Farewell to Greta Hellström in 1922

BY JOHN BETJEMAN

Golden haired and golden hearted
I would ever have you be,
As you were when last we parted
Smiling slow and sad at me.
Oh ! the fighting down of passion !
Oh ! the century-seeming pain—
Parting in this off-hand fashion
In Dungarvan in the rain.

Slanting eyes of blue, unweeping,
Stands my Swedish beauty where
Gusts of Irish rain are sweeping
Round the statue in the square ;
Corner boys against the walling
Watch us furtively in vain,
And the Angelus is calling
Through Dungarvan in the rain.

Gales along the Commeragh Mountains,
Beating sleet on creaking signs,
Iron gutters turned to fountains,
And the windscreen laced with lines,
And the evening getting later,
And the ache, increased again,
As the distance grows the greater
From Dungarvan in the rain.

There is no one now to wonder
What eccentric sits in state
While the beech trees rock and thunder
Round his gate-lodge and his gate.
Gone—the ornamental plaster,
Gone—the overgrown demesne,
And the car goes fast, and faster,
From Dungarvan in the rain.

Had I kissed and drawn you to me,
Had you yielded, warm for cold,
What a power had pounded through me
As I stroked your streaming gold !
You were right to keep us parted ;
Bound and parted we remain,
Aching, if unbroken hearted—
Oh ! Dungarvan in the rain !

The Other Amiel—I

BY ANTHONY POWELL

It is perhaps not surprising, that Henri-Frédéric Amiel, who lived throughout the middle sixty years of the nineteenth century, the high noon of gloomy introspection, should have abandoned himself to self-pity of an unusually determined kind. By his very nature the diarist is especially addicted to this tendency, a powerful enough element in all literature. At the same time one must admit that a more favourable background than his, or even one where his gifts might have proved a less tormenting burden, is not easy to conceive. To be born a Swiss was, after all, a wise choice on the part of a man who preferred to stand aloof from the tumults of Europe; while to become a don might be supposed an equally discreet decision, promising as undisturbed a retreat from life's bear-garden as a sensitive person in an imperfect world might reasonably expect. He had a private income, small but adequate; bearded, cadaverous good-looks; a gift for pleasing women; an early reputation for brilliance. At the Académie de Genève he appeared as advantageously placed, at least outwardly, as any man of letters with (or, indeed without) a fear of life might desire. But he seemed for ever unable to profit by his situation. His lectures were dull, his verse occasional and uninspired, his relations with his colleagues discordant, and his love-affairs timid and inconclusive. Of these circumstantial inadequacies no one was more aware than himself. It was, in fact, from his consciousness of them, and from his need to set down on paper a profound dissatisfaction with himself, that proceeded the work for which he is still remembered—the now almost famous *Journal Intime*.

This diary, beginning in December, 1847, runs to some seventeen thousand pages, of which the last sentence was written in April, 1881. From being a record of his thoughts and a kind of intellectual exercise, it became gradually a refuge and a companion, at last almost his only interest. Into its pages poured everything, good, bad, and indifferent; and the result, in spite of weaknesses and repetitions, gives an analysis of his own character and dissects the human type to which he belonged—diffident and critical, ineffective and penetrating, unoriginal and yet gifted with a powerful sense of form—that in its own manner (comparable in some ways to that of Proust) could scarcely be bettered. In it he expresses perhaps as much as it is possible (at least in an analytical form) to express of

the workings of the human mind and of the human heart. The self-pity, it is true, rarely recedes, but it is as often as not relieved by a kind of deprecatory humour.

Parts only of the *Journal* have been published, the first edition, edited by his friend Edmond Scherer (and translated into English by Mrs. Humphry Ward,) appearing in 1882, the year after Amiel's death. Scherer's deliberately symmetrical selection consists of passages that show the author only at his best—or rather what Scherer considered to be Amiel's best—no excerpts being included that might be held in the eyes of the world to detract from the self-portrait of a high-minded Genevese philosopher. Blunt phrases are modified, incautious strings of adjectives whittled down. The expression of religious doubt is never allowed to transcend the limits permissible to an energetic and inquisitive, but essentially devout, mind. Nor were the dramatic values of the tableau less considered. The diary was presented as opening with the sentence: 'There is but one thing needful—to possess God'; while its equally apt closing quotation was: '*Que vivre est difficile, ô mon cœur fatigué!*'

If, from the great bulk of the manuscript, a book was to be produced in a saleable form, some kind of doctoring was undoubtedly required, and, so far as it went, in spite of his liberal use of scissors and paste, Scherer's edition was good. It made available in a limited space material that introduced the *Journal* to the world, established Amiel's characteristics and qualities, and brought its author immediate posthumous distinction. Indeed, taking into consideration the date of publication and the public to which it was intended to appeal, the selection was judicious. Above all, the book that resulted was readable, a relevant aspect of its quality that might not be inferred from some of the many essays and critical studies that have since been devoted to it.

But although Scherer can hardly be charged with misrepresenting Amiel, he inevitably omitted much that showed sides of his life and personality, which, no less interesting, might be considered less conventionally appropriate to an idealistic professor occupying the chairs of Aesthetics and Moral Philosophy; and it was more than forty years before a substantial alteration was made to the portrait that Scherer had built up. From time to time during this period further extracts were released from the diary, and letters appeared which enlarged and coloured the picture; but it was not until 1927, with the publication of a number of passages mainly referring to Amiel's views on love, that the clue was given to much of the higher pessimism of his perpetual self-examination. The figure of the writer that emerges from this additional material, if not an entirely different man, is certainly a man wearing a different (and far more recognisable) suit of clothes. Before examining this more detailed likeness

it may be well to consider some of the circumstances and early environment that contributed to Amiel's point of view and may have induced his persistent depression of spirit.

The Amiel family, French protestants from Languedoc, had come to Switzerland in the seventeenth century after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. They were hosiers, but became clockmakers in their new country, where they intermarried with other commercial families, numbering a sprinkling of doctors and pastors among their relations. By the time the diarist was born they were well established in Geneva and had added a successful grocery business to the selling of watches, and it was with the former of these two trades that Amiel's father was chiefly occupied. His mother died when he was about eleven years old, and his father about two years later. He and his sisters were brought up in their uncle's family, where there is no reason to suppose that he was unhappy. On the contrary the evidence seems to indicate that he was somewhat spoiled by these relatives and that, if his father had lived, Amiel might not have found it easy to get on with this impatient, strenuous Swiss business man, described as the possessor of 'une nature napoléonienne.'

From his earliest days Amiel himself and those who surrounded him had supposed that he was marked out for great things, although his successes at school were no more than might have been expected from any intelligent pupil. As a young man his brilliance and capacity were widely recognised, but already discouragement was there; and as the years passed the cloud of melancholy darkened, and his secret fears about himself grew ominously. The solid Swiss background, the intellectual adventures in Germany and elsewhere, his assured position in his native town, all these were already dust and ashes. There was a relentless force that had begun to gnaw at him within, and in December, 1849, he wrote in the *Journal*:¹

At twenty-eight years of age, not yet, as Pythagoras says, to have betrayed one's strength to any woman, or, as Goerres says, not to have tasted, or, as Moses says, not to have known, or as the French novelists say, not to have possessed, is a phenomenon, or rather a curiosity, of which none of my acquaintances of my age can offer a second example. Is it a good thing? Is it a misfortune? Is it stupidity? Is it a virtue? I have often debated this question. To have slept in all the beds in Europe from Upsala to Malta, from Saint-Malo to Vienna, in châlets and hotels, among the shepherdesses of Brittany and a step from the girls of Naples and to know sexual pleasure only in the imagination; to have had the most precocious temperament and to have read the most provocative books; to have had even the most seductive chances, and all this before twenty;

¹ This and other quotations from the *Journal Intime* are taken from the edition called *Philine*, published in translation by Constable in 1931.

curious even about crime, and, with greater reason, about love, inflammable, always blundering, by what miracle did I bring home the innocence of my childhood?

This then was the key to some—perhaps most—of his unhappiness. It was a state of affairs that was not brought to a speedy conclusion; and, even when the difficulty was overcome, the remedy came too late to be efficacious. In the meantime there were a number of flirtations, some supplied by 'Clot., Sar., Alex., Eriph.', whose abbreviated names remain their sole memorial; while there was 'Egeria,' who stayed the course better than the rest, but was written down at last a bad influence. There were the Mercier sisters, too, whose mother kept a girls' school, and to the elder of whom, Fanny Mercier, he left, when he died, his diary and correspondence. He used to call her 'the little Calvinist' and she provided much of the sentimental and domestic relationship that he needed—and was intelligent as well. She used sometimes to tell him that she was his 'widow.' Intellectual friendships of this sort pleased him, but they were not enough. It was not until the age of thirty-nine, however, that he took the plunge, when the woman he calls 'Philine' (the undoubted heroine of the later editions of the *Journal*) became his mistress; and, at last on 6 October, 1860, he was able to write in his diary :

But what am I to call the experience of this evening? Was it disappointing? Was it intoxicating? Neither the one nor the other. For the first time I have received a woman's favours, and frankly compared to what the imagination assumes or expects, they are a small matter. It was like a bucket of cold water. I am very glad of it. It has cooled even while it has enlightened me. Physical pleasure is three-fourths or more desire, that is to say, imagination. The poetry about it is worth infinitely more than the reality. But the keen interest of the experience is essentially intellectual; I can at least reason intelligently about women, without that semi-silliness of ignorance or that faulty idealisation of my thoughts, which has embarrassed me hitherto. I regard the entire sex with the calm of a husband, and I know now that, for me at least, the physical woman is almost nothing.

But it was not quite as easy as all that; and the entries in the months that follow describe somewhat breathlessly the emotions of a lover, emotions characteristic of a much younger man, but written with the observation and acuteness of an intellectually mature mind—and recorded with an unusual honesty. Sometimes the whole affair seemed easy, agreeable, relatively unimportant; at other times, a wearisome entanglement, promising nothing but difficulties, dangers, and embarrassments; and then, again, infinitely desirable, the most important thing in the world. But his own egotism and self-con-

sciousness were rarely absent, making enjoyment, even in passion, scarcely achievable. On 25 February, 1861, he was back at the old subject and writes :

Sexuality has been my Nemesis, my torment since childhood. . . . Disturbance of the sexual functions is, I believe, one of the scourges of this nervous and enervated generation of ours. The whole of a woman's physical life revolves about this centre ; the man's too, though less evidently. What is there surprising in that ? Is not life the keyword of the universe, and generation the hearth of life, and sex the key of generation ? For us, it is the question of questions. Whoever can neither reproduce himself, nor produce, is no longer a living being.

Not much is known of Philine herself, who was twenty-six when she met Amiel. Divorced and a widow with a small son, she had connections that were undesirable from Amiel's point of view. Her ineligible family seem to have offered certainly one of the positive reasons why he could never bring himself to marry her, although, about 1870, he came near to overcoming his hesitations. A passage dated 3 August, 1868, throws a little light both on the way he regarded Philine and on his own literary tastes :

(11.30) I am finishing with a sad heart a novel by Theuriet (*Madame Véronique*). It is like a challenge. Véronique bears an astonishing resemblance to X [Philine] in appearance, character, and almost in her life story. These unexpected comparisons produce a cruel and fantastic impression. The important difference is that Mme La Faucherie resigned herself and that Véronique was only separated. On the other hand she had no impossible family. But this book has been like a vision to me ; except for the ending which, God willing, will be otherwise.

Those who have the curiosity to disinter André Theuriet's novel will find a story of French provincial life, vapid in the extreme. Mme La Faucherie is a major's widow, living in the forests of the Argonne with her twenty-four-year-old son, Gérard, whom she decides to marry to Adeline Obligite, the pretty, but worldly, daughter of a local timber merchant. The Obligite family have staying with them a niece, Véronique, a young woman who had made a bad marriage in Alsace, and become a widow at the end of a year. Gérard falls in love with Véronique ; and, later, while visiting a distant farm belonging to his mother, he encounters Bernard du Tremble, Véronique's husband, still alive, forty years of age, but in appearance older, an impoverished, but proud and bitter, glass-blower. The plot creaks laboriously this way and that, until Véronique rejoins her husband, the murder of whom by a charcoal-burner (whose daughter du Tremble had seduced) brings the tale to a happy conclusion.

It is surprising that so discerning a literary critic as Amiel should have been able to endure these inanities, much less be deeply moved by them. The lapse must be regarded in terms of 'going to the pictures,' a sphere where the action and psychology of Madame Véronique would not be out of place. Of greater interest is the question of how much can be learnt from the stiff, mechanical gestures of Theuriet's puppets that has bearing on Philine and her background, as seen through the eyes of Amiel. Véronique was small, pale-faced, and dark, with a high forehead, black eyebrows, and red lips. Her behaviour is melodramatic and her incompatibility with her husband is never fully explained. She belongs to that gallery of haughty, sensitive, misunderstood ladies with husbands who are beastly to them, who reach their meridian at Irene in *The Forsyte Saga*, to disappear slowly from the literary scene as a changing way of life supplied them with compensations that brought in their turn a different series of problems, to be argued out in a different sort of novel. Bernard du Tremble is the only figure in the book who shows any sign of coming to life. He is a 'gentleman glass-maker,' boasting of the letters patent conferred on his family by Henri IV in 1603, and presumably owing his description to some special knowledge of local types possessed by the author. He complains that women like only successful men and speaks of his wife's obstinacy, her reserve, and her pride, saying that she was not pretty but had 'je ne sais quoi d'attrait qui vous mettait le diable au corps.' His business ventures had gone wrong, he drank too much, his health was bad. Worst of all he was in love with his wife, and his coarse manner of showing this had finally made her leave him.

To what extent this story resembled that of Philine's first marriage it is impossible to conjecture with any hope of accuracy from the facts available, but one cannot help feeling that Amiel in making the comparison may have allowed his romanticism to run away with him. That Philine loved him and was anxious enough to marry him seems plain, but his congenital indecision always made their relationship difficult in the extreme. It is not surprising to find that, after some eight years, he was full of doubts that she might be deceiving him. What form these fears took is not entirely clear from the *Journal*. In July, 1868, some of the correspondence between them was missing from the file (where, with methodical sentiment, it was arranged), and he feared that Philine might have taken the letters for some undesirable purpose. Whether the letters were her own, which she wished to destroy in case they might fall into the hands of another lover, or whether they were Amiel's, and he feared some kind of blackmail, is not apparent. An impression is conveyed by the cumulative effect of a number of related passages in the diary that Philine may, indeed, have had some other semi-permanent tie, which haunted

Amiel's thoughts, and which gave his own relatives some more or less substantial cause to object to any question of marriage. In September, 1868, he burst out against them :

Oh, the Family ! If the superstition with which loyalty and religion have surrounded that institution would allow the truth to be told, to what account would it not be called ! What an innumerable company of martyrs it has sullenly, inexorably, forced into submission ! What hearts it has stifled, lacerated, broken ! What oubliettes, what death sentences, what dungeons, what abominable tortures in its annals, darker than those of the Spanish Inquisition. One could fill all the wells of the earth with the tears it has caused to be shed in secret, one could people a planet with the beings it has made wretched, could double the average of human life with the years of those whose days it has shortened. Oh, the suspicion, the jealousies, the slanders, the rancours, the hates of the family, who has measured their depth ? And the venomous words, the insults that never cease to rattle, the invisible thrusts of the stiletto, the infernal second intentions in speech, for that matter the mere irreparable slips of the tongue, the deadly chattering, what a legion of suffering have they not engendered ! The family arrogates to itself impunity in abuse, the privilege of insult, irresponsibility in affronting. It punishes you alike for protecting yourself from it, for having confided in it . . .

The attack continues in this vein in equal length to the passage quoted above, and no doubt Amiel had had to put up with much from his sisters and their husbands. On the other hand, if he felt so strongly that a protest should be made against the tyranny of family opinion, here was an excellent opportunity for action. The fact was that in this as in all other questions that came to him he could not make up his mind. Would he have been a happier man if he had married Philine ? If the *Journal* is to be believed, he could hardly have been more wretched than he remained as a bachelor. He would at least have had someone on the spot to look after him and he would have been able to extend the scope of his acute observation to the sphere of married life and its psychological intricacies. This was, however, not to be, and in July, 1874, he noted, 'when she kindly mended some of my linen for me,' that the enchantment was over. However Philine and Egeria had become friends by this time, and had arranged that, when they died, each should have half of Amiel's blue velvet waist-coat (that he had worn in Berlin) upon which to lay her cheek.

To what extent were his regrets and self-pity justified ? Could he have made of his life more of a success ? What were his real talents and were they wasted ? To Matthew Arnold, writing in 1887, Amiel's gift appeared to lie in the direction of literary criticism.

Arnold found the assessments of Sainte-Beuve, La Fontaine, and Victor Hugo, a great deal more entertaining than the philosophy and psychology contained in the *Journal*. He preferred Amiel's views on society, national characteristics, and religion, to his self-examination and his despair ; and it must be admitted that when he allows himself to digress (which he does all too frequently) on the subject of Maia, the Great Wheel, and the Infinite Illusion, Amiel is not at his best. Times and critics change, so that to Mr. Middleton Murry in 1921, Arnold's essay seemed 'irrelevant and superficial,' and Amiel appeared 'a Stoic who had a clear intuition of the insufficiency of Stoicism,' whose 'title to remembrance rests in the last resort upon his profound conviction of the necessity of morality.'

Neither Arnold nor Mr. Murry had been in a position to read any but the bowdlerised version of the diary when they wrote their articles. The additional matter would, perhaps, not have caused them to alter their opinions, though resemblances to his own Swiss love-affair could hardly have failed to strike the author of the lyrical sequence to Marguerite. Others, however, may feel that the passages which refer to Amiel's emotional life suggest that he was on the whole more concerned with, and influenced by, his own individual problems than by any very remarkable grasp of, or preoccupation with, those of the universe in general. He was not a poet ; nor, indeed, much of a philosopher. It is doubtful whether he could have written a novel. He was not, in fact, what is called 'creative.' On the other hand his critical faculty was exceptionally keen and, in spite of his indecision, he had a power of anatomising ideas with extraordinary precision. Having given his views in one direction, his habitual vacillation (or his unhappy sense of balance) caused him always to provide the other side of the case, so that most of his best enunciative passages in the diary close with a weak statement of the opposite point of view. But although it is easy to disparage his diffuseness and other faults of style, the *Journal Intime* remains a work of enormous talent. There is a further aspect that is worth comment. In spite of the fact that its writer never came to England, and that his mind might be supposed to belong to a type notably far removed from any intellectual orientation common in this country, it is curious how often his thoughts and ideas seem to take on an English tone. Indeed, although Amiel's mental power were of an infinitely higher order, he sometimes strangely recalls his contemporary fellow-diarist, Kilvert. Is it possible that Amiel, too, might have found some content as a country parson ?

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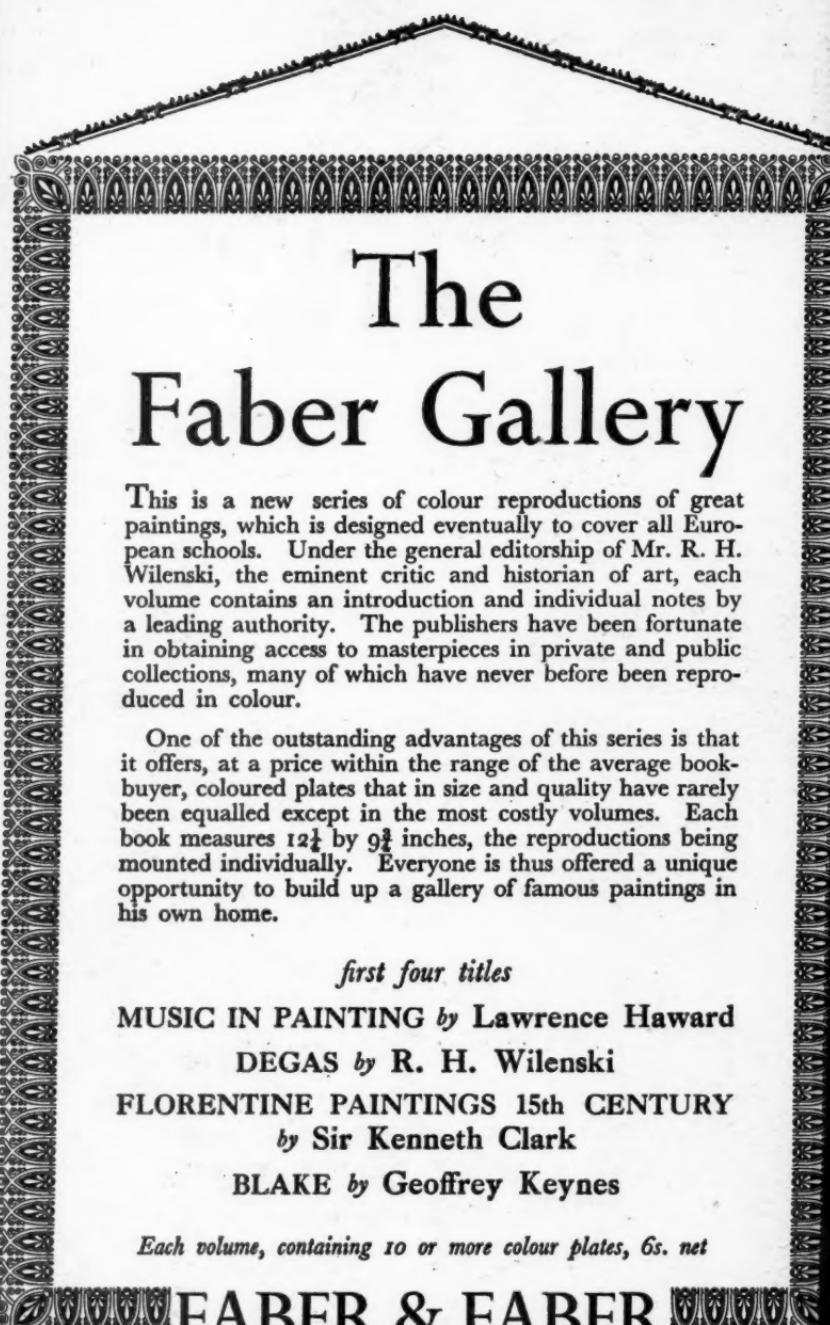
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